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Norma Teagarden

GRAND LADY OF PIANO JAZZ

With Introductions by
Cyra McFadden and Marilyn Unsworth

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
1992-1994

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Norma Teagarden and her band at the Washington Square Bar and Grill, 1994. Fred Anderson, clarinet, Waldo Carter, trumpet, and Brian Richardson, trombone. Don Bennett, bass extraordinaire, is missing.

Photograph by Etta Clark

Cataloging information

TEAGARDEN, Norma (b. 1911)

Musician

Grand Lady of Piano Jazz, 1994, v, 119 pp.

Family history and early childhood in Texas and Oklahoma; jazz in the twenties and thirties in New York City and the Southwest; living and working in Hollywood, and touring in wartime; jazz greats: Paul Whitemen, Mary Lou Williams, Marian McPartland, Earl Hines, the Jack Teagarden Band, Louis Armstrong's All Stars; women's bands; life in northern California; Dixieland festivals and styles; thoughts on volunteer service. Includes joint interview with Irene Teagarden, LaNora Teagarden, and Mary Grubbs.

Introductions by Cyra McFadden, San Francisco Examiner columnist; and Marilyn Unsworth, president, Norma Teagarden Fan Club.

Interviewed 1992-1994 by Caroline Crawford. The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

OBITUARIES

Norma Teagarden

A funeral was held yesterday for jazz pianist Norma Teagarden, whose intricate counterpoints and tough, gentle demeanor were a fixture of San Francisco nightclubs and restaurants for more than half a century. Ms. Teagarden, 85, died Wednesday of heart failure in a San Francisco hospital.

"You just sort of have to play the way you are," Ms. Teagarden said, and she did that ever since landing her first gig in an Oklahoma City nightclub at the age of 14.

Since 1975, she had been playing regularly at the Washington Square Bar and Grill, where scores of devoted listeners sat up close so as not to miss a note.

"She carried on that great swing tradition," said Chronicle jazz reviewer Jesse Hamlin. "She was a real spirited, lively lady and she played spirited, lively piano."

A native of Vernon, Tex., Ms. Teagarden was the last surviving member of the Teagarden family of musicians that included her brother Jack, the celebrated trombonist, and brothers Charlie, a trumpeter, and Cub, a drummer. Their mother, pianist Helen Teagarden, gave Ms. Teagarden her first instruction.

"Mother would buy an instruction book, go to a pawn shop and locate the instrument for it, and we would learn to play," recalled Ms. Teagarden.

After high school, she toured New Mexico with a band, playing at Lions Club dances and other modest gatherings because, as she said, "I couldn't stand being broke."

She played with her brothers in New York and Chicago and, in 1942, joined her brother Jack's big band. She also performed with bands led by Ben Pollack and Ada Leonard. In the late 1940s, she was the leader of her own band and began teaching students.

She was often joined on stage by her mother and, in 1963, the en-

tire family performed together at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

She took the Washington Square job at the behest of her husband, John Friedlander, who she said "got tired of listening to bad piano pupils and said he'd rather I worked at night."

In 1981, she was honored by Mayor Dianne Feinstein, whose daughter had been a piano pupil. Two years later, Ms. Teagarden was crowned Empress of Old Sacramento's annual Dixieland Jazz Festival.

Throughout her career, she played with a strong, striding left hand and a softer right hand. "All my life I've used my left hand differently than they do now," she said in 1989. "Some people nowadays are like lightning with their right hand. But I like a whole spectrum of things that you learn after being in the business for some time."

The best part of working at Washington Square, she once said, is that the boss "is real nice, never tells you what to play, and you just take your intermissions when you think you should."

She is survived by her husband John Friedlander of San Francisco; three nephews, Joe Teagarden of Atlanta, Ga., Jim Teagarden of Boulder City, Nev., and Gilbert Teagarden of McQueeny, Tex., and two sisters-in-law, Lenore and Irene Teagarden of Woodland, California.

The family requests that donations be made to St. Anthony Din-

ing Room, 121 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco 94102.

— Steve Rubenstein



Norma
Teagarden

DONORS TO THE NORMA TEAGARDEN ORAL HISTORY

The Regional Oral History Office, on behalf of future researchers, would like to express its thanks to the following individuals whose encouragement and support have made possible the oral history of Norma Teagarden. Special thanks are due to Bud Johns and Ed and Mary Etta Moose for their help in raising funds.

Tita Cooley

Caroline and Tom Crawford

Morley and Patricia Farquar

Ron Fimrite

Bud Johns and Fran Moreland Johns in memory of
Judith Clancy Johns

Cyra McFadden

Maureen Sullivan

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INTRODUCTION--by Cyra McFadden¹

One element of that indefinable thing called "class" may be staying power--doing something superbly for a whole lifetime. Norma Teagarden, frequently described as "the reigning queen of traditional jazz piano," has been a working musician since she was fourteen years old. Now she's eighty-three, taking life easier and only plays one steady gig at Washington Square Bar & Grill on Wednesday nights.

She doesn't take life easier at the keyboard, however. The lady has a driving left hand that could pull a freight train. The younger musicians who jam with her on those Wednesday nights get a workout; Norma is a pro, not a hobbyist, and her approach to the piano is "Let's get down to business here." She looks like a Midwestern school teacher, but is a living repository of jazz history: Over all those years, in all those smoky saloons, she learned about all there is to know about making a piano jump through hoops.

Somehow she's also remained the small town Texas and Oklahoma girl whose strongest epithet is "gee." Though she's been married to John Friedlander for almost forty years, I always think of her as Miss Norma. It has something to do with class again.

The celebrated jazz pianist wears her gray hair in a bouncy pageboy, turns herself out in neat suits and blouses with pussycat bows and keeps time with a foot shod in a classic pump. She's trim, energetic and looks indestructibly healthy, having had cancer twice and recovered strongly. Her smile puts out as much warmth as a fair-sized toaster oven.

The last member of a famous jazz family, Norma Teagarden learned the piano at her mother's knee. She says her mother, who died at ninety-two, was still playing until the last few years of her life. Brother Jack was the legendary trombonist. Brother Charles played trumpet and third brother Cub was a drummer. When the Teagardens' father died in the 1918 flu epidemic, their mother was left a widow at twenty-eight. Norma went to work in the telephone office at fifteen, lying about her age. "That was the Depression. About all I knew was having a hard time." At night, she played piano in small dance halls and nightclubs, making maybe \$2 a night. "Musicians worked seven days a week then. I never had a day off until I came to California in '41."

That was when Charlie and Cub enlisted in the Army Air Corps. "I went on the road with Jack. It was the first time in twenty years that

¹Introduction based on an article in the San Francisco Examiner.

the family was in the same town." During the war, the band toured "any way we could get there," often on overcrowded trains because of the gasoline shortage. "I sat on luggage on different trains sometimes for twenty-four, twenty-five days at a time without going to bed. Now I look at old itineraries and wonder, how in the world could I have done it?"

She estimates that she played about eight hundred one-nighters when she toured with Jack Teagarden's band in the 1940s, with the occasional luxury of a two-nighter. "A big band has to move. It can't afford to sit still or miss a single night. There are people who've been with Basie for thirty years, traveling all that time like a circus. That's why they don't live that long."

Norma can't keep track of all her honors and accolades anymore. In 1983, she was "Empress of Jazz" at Sacramento's Dixieland Jubilee. [That's one of her favorite titles and she still plays every year at the festival there over the Memorial Day weekend].

Calling someone a "lady" raises some feminist hackles these days; it's considered a condescending word. Not when the lady is down-home, classy Miss Norma Teagarden.

Cyra McFadden
Columnist, San Francisco Examiner

March 1994
San Francisco, California

INTRODUCTION--by Marilyn Unsworth

Since I first heard Norma Teagarden perform at the Washington Square Bar & Grill in 1984, I've missed only a few of her Wednesday night sessions in North Beach. In addition to being a fan, I've become a close friend of Norma's over the years, traveling with her to Dixieland festivals around the country, going to see her sisters-in-law in Woodland, California, and spending many holidays with her, my husband Bob, and Norma's husband, John Friedlander.

Norma exemplifies the adage "youth is a gift of nature; age is a work of art." Everyone who knows Norma loves her and wonders what keeps her so vibrant and lively. I believe the answer can be found in her interest in the world around her and the people who populate that world. There is another adage: "Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver, the other gold." If an individual's wealth is measured by the number of friends one has, Norma is a very rich woman. Her ability to make new friends is generated by a sincere interest in their interests and experiences.

While many of Norma's friends come from the world of music, an equal number are people she has met through other interests--exercise classes at the YMCA, volunteer work in an outreach program of the American Cancer Society and gatherings of neighbors in the high-rise building where she and her husband live. Years and distance don't diminish Norma's friendships. She recently said, "You know, I don't understand people who don't want to keep in touch with people from their past. If I went to Oklahoma City (a place she lived over fifty years ago), the first thing I would do is phone my friends."

Norma's two sisters-in-law, LaNora and Irene Teagarden, widows of her brothers Charles and Cub, are her dearest friends. On a weekend visit shortly after Irene and LaNora moved to California, the three ladies began reminiscing. Each sentence began, "Remember when...?" This continued far into the night and resumed the next morning. Each memory was punctuated by much laughter and a few tears. At the time, I felt that this history of family and music should be heard by everyone. That opportunity is finally here, in the following pages. It is a joyous account of a great lady's life and times.

Marilyn Unsworth
President of the Norma Teagarden Fan
Club

March 30, 1994
San Francisco, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--by Caroline Crawford

The idea of interviewing Norma Teagarden for the oral history office music series came from some of the Wednesday night regulars at the Washington Square Bar & Grill in San Francisco. Wednesday night is Norma's weekly gig in North Beach. She plays the piano a couple of hours solo, pulling out the long stride lines with her left hand and spinning little sound flowers with her right, and when she finishes a signature tune--"Stars Fell on Alabama" or "Every Time I Say Goodbye," she turns a signature smile of thousand watts or so to the audience. Several of her fans haven't missed Norma's night in decades. "If they didn't show up," she once told me, "I'd have to call the police."

Soon her sidemen wander in and join her; occasionally a horn player from London or Tokyo with whom she has corresponded gets an introduction and sits in.

Bud Johns, one of the great all-time jazz fans, introduced me to Norma during a break between sets one night in 1991 and she agreed to begin the oral history right away. We arranged to get together in the apartment she shares with her husband John Friedlander in the lee of St. Mary's Cathedral soon after that. In her bright, elegant living room, the two of us and John looked first at scrapbooks filled with photographs of the Teagarden family and the legends of six decades of jazz history. Then we went through the journals she kept so meticulously when on tour in the 1940s: a hotel room in Tacoma (three dollars); candy (thirty-five cents); eleven dollars for a mother's day dress for Helen Teagarden, who taught all the Teagardens around the family piano and supported them by playing in silent film houses when they were children.]

During our five interviews, Norma occasionally went to the grand piano in her study to illustrate a style or a remembered tune from times past. In that room are her musical memories: books and music; clippings and framed awards from festivals and jazz societies. We frequently walked to nearby Japantown for a break and passed the YWCA gym where Norma works out when she is away from the keyboard.

The final taping took place two hours north of San Francisco in Woodland, where we met two of Norma's sisters-in-law and an old family friend for lunch and a brief interview. Norma, Irene, LaNora and Pat laughed a lot during the hour or so, remembering the good times and the hard times and the generosity that flowed among their families in times of need.

Norma subsequently reviewed the transcript, corrected dates and spellings and she and John chose the photographs for the volume. For

continuity, interview three, which covered Norma Teagarden's early years, was placed at the beginning of the volume. Late in February I brought photographer Etta Clark to the Washington Square Bar & Grill to photograph Norma and her group. Millie, a North Beach institution, was circulating with her camera during the shooting, but said she didn't mind another photographer on her turf; fans from Australia and England had taken tables close to the piano, a basketball game danced silently on the big screen over the bar and Norma flashed a smile when I thanked her for the story. "I've had a lot of fun," she said, "I guess that's the story of my life."

Caroline C. Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

March 1994
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Your full name Marna Hagarden Friedlander

Date of birth April 28, 1911 Birthplace Vernon, Texas

Father's full name Charles Wadman Hagarden Birthplace Texas

Occupation Cotton gin maintenance engineer

Mother's full name Helene George Birthplace Elizabethtown, Texas

Occupation Insurance, movie trade, restaurant services

Family

Spouse John Edgar Friedlander

Children None

Where did you grow up? Texas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri

Education Completed high school

Areas of expertise music

Special interests or activities Volunteer for American Cancer Society,
playing for schools, hospitals, various churches,
appearing and performing at Festivals, Traveling.

I FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD IN THE SOUTHWEST

[Interview 3: August 1, 1992] ##¹

Life in Vernon, Texas

Crawford: Let's start at the beginning, Norma, and let me ask you when and where you were born.

Teagarden: I was born in Vernon, Texas, just a little town near the Oklahoma border, on April 28, 1911.

Crawford: This biographical sheet shows Norma Louise Teagarden Friedlander, your married name. Who were you named after?

Teagarden: I haven't any idea. I don't know. I think my folks just picked names they liked.

Crawford: Would you name the others in your family?

Teagarden: Well, Jack's real name was Weldon. Weldon Leo Teagarden. Charles was Charles Eugene Teagarden. Cub was Clois Lee Teagarden, and Cub was the only one I know named after a friend of my father's, Clois. He always hated that name. We always called him Cub. I think we just began to call him Cub when he was little. I think Jack did that.

¹This symbol (##) indicates that a tape or a segment of tape has begun or ended. For a tape guide see page following transcript.

Crawford: He got rid of that right away.

Teagarden: He sure did!

Crawford: How about your mother and father?

Teagarden: My father died in 1918 during the flu epidemic, so my memories of him are pretty hazy. He was a mechanic for a whole string of cotton gins, and he came home on weekends; he was gone all through the week. And then dying so young like that--he was only thirty-nine--I never really got to know him much.

Jack did--he was almost seven years older--but the other brothers were younger than I was. Charles was 1913, and Cub was 1915, so Cub was not quite three when my father died. So I really don't remember him very well, but I know he played trumpet and he loved music. Mama said he got up every morning at 4:30 or five before he had to go to work to practice.

I don't think he was as good a musician as my mother was--I know he wasn't. Mama had much the most talent.

Crawford: I know I have a tape of her playing when she was in her seventies. What were your parents' names?

Teagarden: My father was Charles Teagarden--I think the middle name was Woodrow--They called him Woody. My brother was named after him. But my mother, Helen, was left with four kids to support, and she worked in the movie houses for a while, and then she had some students in the daytime.

My grandmother had restaurants--the big cheap kinds that feed five and six hundred at a meal, you know. Those all-you-can-eat, twenty-five-cents places. She was in Oklahoma city--we didn't stay in Texas. I left right after my father's funeral and went to Nebraska with my father's brother. He wanted me because he thought Mama had her hands full.

So I stayed there for one term, and then my mother wanted me back home. She didn't like the idea of me being so far away. So she sent for me and I came back by myself on the train. I was nine or ten. I had so much fun because I had to change trains two or three times. I had a lower berth and I know my uncle gave me money because every time they'd come by, they

said I could have anything I wanted--you know, candy and fruit and all the things they have on trains. So I had a good time.

Chappell, Nebraska, and Oklahoma City

Crawford: She didn't move up to Nebraska?

Teagarden: Not right then. But after I came back, my uncle wanted us to come up there. So we did. We moved up to Chappell, Nebraska, and Mama had a job in the movie theater. One of those silent movie shows, you know. She played the piano, and Jack ran the projector.

Crawford: And what did you do?

Teagarden: What did I do? I sat on the front seat. We didn't have babysitters so mostly we went to the show and sat there until time to come home. [laughter]

I look back now and I don't know how she did it. She would bring a little red wagon and she'd pull my youngest brother home. He'd be asleep, and the winters in Nebraska were horrible. There would be blizzards there, and it was so cold that--well, Jack wouldn't--but the rest of us slept together. We stayed there about a year, and then my grandmother wanted us to come to Oklahoma City. So we just packed up all our stuff. That must have been about '21, something like that.

Crawford: How did your parents meet?

Teagarden: My father was a clerk in a hotel that my grandmother owned. He was the night clerk. My grandmother had five daughters and all of them were very pretty. And she was so worried about them that she said: "You marry this one, and you marry that one." [laughter] She married them all off.

My mother was thirteen and she didn't want to get married! That was pretty young, but I think one was fifteen, one was sixteen--they were all married by the time they were sixteen.

Grandmother Tillie Gienger

Crawford: You had a strong-willed grandmother. What was her name?

Teagarden: Her name was Tillie Gienger--she was Pennsylvania Dutch. That was her married name. My grandfather was from Germany.

My father was just crazy about my mother, and after a while they had a good marriage. They went on their honeymoon and Mama was homesick so he went out and bought her a mandolin. He was eleven or twelve years older than she was.

Jack came along two years later when she was fifteen, so it was young to start a family.

Crawford: Your grandmother was Tillie Gienger?

Teagarden: Yes, and her maiden name was Faulk. I remember her; I was about thirteen or fourteen when she died. I don't know what we would have done without her. She had executive ability, and Mama had a sister who was also a widow--with five children. Mama had three of us at home then--Jack was gone by the time he was fifteen or sixteen. He was on the road.

My grandmother would pay all the kids to peel a hamper of beans or a big bushel. We would all sit out in the alley and peel beans and onions and things, and we marched up to the cash register and tell her how much we had done and it wasn't much but [she would give us] something, you know.

Crawford: And she was there?

Teagarden: Oh, yes. She was at the cash register all the time. And every Sunday we'd all march by the cash register and she gave us carfare and church money to give to the church. My grandmother was a member of the reorganized Latter Day Saints Church--their headquarters were in Independence, Missouri.

Joseph Smith founded it, and then after he was killed, Brigham Young took part of them to Utah, and this particular group stayed apart; they never practiced polygamy. But they had similar things. The reorganized Latter Day Saint church was a poor little church, because in the Mormon church you give ten percent of your income to that church, and that has nothing to

do with social security or taxes--that ten percent goes in there. They take care of their own, and they have a wonderful welfare program.

In the First World War, or Second World War, they sent a whole battalion and they paid and equipped them themselves--didn't want to ask the government. Mormons don't go on welfare--the church helps them.

Crawford I didn't know that.

Teagarden: But my grandmother was very religious, and ten percent of everything that came in there went to the church, and she always managed to feed everybody. Then I had an uncle who died, and his second wife--he had been married before--but she came there with two children. So there were five of my cousins and three of us--eight--and then the other two--ten. Ten of us and one part of our life we lived on the second floor of a building and there were alcoves with curtains across each one, and then my grandmother and Mama.

Crawford: Oh, all together?

Teagarden: Oh, yes, the whole kit and caboodle! My grandmother would have these nightly prayers, and it was supposed to go around--you know, everybody was supposed to say a few prayers before going to bed, and I know Cub was such a tease, he'd put in "God bless brother Simmons" or somebody that grandmother just couldn't stand. [laughter]

Anyway, that's the way we were brought up, you know. A lot of cousins.

Crawford: This was Oklahoma City, and she had established the restaurant with your grandfather?

Teagarden: No, no, he died before I was born.

Crawford: What was the name of the restaurant?

Teagarden: You know, I don't remember. She had a lot of restaurants over the years. But that particular one was a two-story brick building, and the second floor was just plain, so we just had all these curtains across.

Crawford: Did she have a large staff?

Teagarden: Oh, they had a lot of help. Cooks and dishwashers. You know, it was during the Depression, and my grandmother couldn't stand to turn anyone away. There would be as many lines at the back door waiting to eat as there would be at the front door. But I really believe that's why she prospered, because she believed in not ever turning anyone away.

Crawford: It's a wonderful story.

Teagarden: Yes, she had a lot of nice things about her.

But then we moved to Wichita, Kansas--my mother got married. I was in eleventh grade when we moved there, but I had skipped a grade, so I must have been fourteen or fifteen. I don't blame him [for not staying around]. She had three children and there was no such thing as social security or any aid to dependent children or anything, so if someone got married they took on the responsibility of shoes for three children that didn't belong to them and we were kind of a bratty age anyway. We didn't want Mama to get married.

Crawford: Did you make life pretty difficult for him?

Teagarden: We just didn't do anything to make it very easy. But she was very attractive, and there were lots of people she could have married so easily.

Crawford: Did she marry your father in Vernon?

Teagarden: Yes. The hotel my grandmother owned then was in Vernon. They homesteaded right in the center of Electra, Texas, and then my grandmother sold it all for fifty dollars an acre, and it turned out to be one of the biggest oil fields in Texas!

She sold it to the Waggoners, and they've got a ranch down there that is like the King Ranch. We stayed there one time when I was with Jack's band, and they took us out to this ranch, and they look after the cows in helicopters. You have no idea of the luxury, and all the Waggoners came out to Hollywood and married Hollywood starlets. The bathrooms were all mirrors; you know, all along the sides. Anyway, that's who my grandmother sold to in Electra.

The Teagarden Family

Crawford: What a story! Well, how about the name Teagarden. I've read that there is a Native American connection, but you told me there wasn't, that the Teagardens came through Germany through England in 1736. What about the other side of the family? Do you know as much?

Teagarden: Well, that's another story. About two years ago I got a letter from a fellow in Germany, and he was writing a book about Jack and wanted to come over and look through anything I had. I asked John [Friedlander] if he could stay with us and he said okay, so he came over here and turned out to be a delightful person. Turns out he is a juvenile court judge in Germany and plays trombone too.

So he got fascinated when I told him my grandfather came over from Germany. I had no idea where he was from or anything, and it was an unusual name for him too. But some time after, he noticed in the paper that there was a well-known athlete named Gienger, and he got in touch with him, and this fellow got in touch with someone who had all the family records.

Crawford: And he was able to find out more about the family?

Teagarden: Yes. He found my grandfather's birth certificate, and you aren't going to believe this, but the family goes all the way back to 1490. He said there was somebody back there that had kept all that stuff. I've got the family tree, his baptism record and his birth record.

We didn't really ever know much about the Teagardens, because we were always around my aunts on Mama's side. I don't really know how they got to Texas. They didn't used to use the "a." It was Teegarden, and some people use that now, but they are all related, anyway.

Sooner or later, I think two brothers came over here, and then they separated and settled in different parts, and one branch started the "Tea."

Life and Music in Vernon

Crawford: Talk about your house in Vernon. What kind of place was it in your memory?

Teagarden: It was just a little house. Very, very tiny and just a real poor little house. I was about seven when I left there--I don't really know, but I was back there about four years ago for the opening of a museum, a new museum that they have there. [The town] was fourteen thousand then. The house had been torn down.

Crawford: Was it an oil town?

Teagarden: Oil and cattle.

Crawford: What was your exposure to music there?

Teagarden: My father was in the city band, and Mama taught us all music.

Crawford: What was her background?

Teagarden: Well, when she was a little girl she had an accident and fell off a horse, and they had to keep her out of school for two or three years, I don't know why. It might have been seizures, or something, but anyway they gave her music lessons and this professor came to the house. She learned classical music. But she couldn't afford lessons for us--life was a struggle to be sure we ate!

I had some [well-off] cousins: one was a vice president at McGraw Hill and one was a superior court judge. So many of my aunts married well and eventually they were well fixed. But Mother always felt so bad because she couldn't do anything for us. Instead of that, she certainly started us out on the road to make a living, you know, and I think it was wonderful what she did.

Crawford: Talk about the aunts. There were five girls altogether?

Teagarden: Yes. Mama's sister Barbara lost her husband early. The others--one came out to California and her husband was in the oil business, and her son is the judge. They are all college

graduates, and their children are Ph.D.s. None of us went to college.

Crawford: You were all performing at an early age, Charles on trumpet, and Cub on drums.

Teagarden: Yes. Charles was about seventeen when he went to a summer place--Lake Okoboji in Ohio--with a band from the University of Oklahoma. They had a jazz band. Jack was in New York at the time, and he dropped in to hear him and just fell in love with Charles' playing. He took him back to New York with him.

Charles played with Ben Pollack, and he and Benny Goodman rented an apartment together in New York. Charles ended up with Whiteman--he took Bunny Berigan's place with Paul Whiteman. The two of them had a phenomenal success. I went down to Roswell, New Mexico, when I got out of school. Cub came later. There was a territory band out there and we played all the places, like Ruidoso and we played all the DeMolay dances, Lions and Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs.

Crawford: This was your first professional job?

Teagarden: The most consistent. I had played a few jobs in Oklahoma City, but that's where I started doing nothing else.

Crawford: Your mother raised the four of you and she taught all of you music. How did she manage to do that?

Teagarden: Well, she had rooming houses after my father died. She'd have these big old houses and she'd rent out all the rooms.

Crawford: Let me be sure I have this straight. Your father died in 1918, and until that time you were in Vernon.

Teagarden: Yes.

Crawford: I once read that your house there was next to a revival meeting. I think Jack wrote about it. You must have heard a lot of gospel music.

Teagarden: Yes. Jack did more than I did. It makes a big difference when there is that much difference in your ages. But I remember a couple of those when they had the big tents, and Mama said that Charles was just a little baby and he'd sing "godie,

hallelujah, we're on the way to heaven, shoutin' all 'de way!"
[laughter]

Crawford: So you were all exposed to that music.

Teagarden: Yes, and you know a long time ago all the houses had pianos, no matter how poor the house was. They didn't have radios; they didn't have tvs, and people came to each others' houses. It was a nicer time than now in some ways. I wish there was some way to get those times back.

Anyway, everybody sang, and even when we were in back peeling beans, we'd sing three-part harmony--the girl cousins. And the boys, Cub sold papers, and Charles delivered for a drug store on a bicycle.

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Crawford: What do you remember of your grandmother and your mother? What special advice did they give you?

Teagarden: I was always a little afraid of my grandmother. I wasn't really afraid of her, but she was all business. She was very fair but not very warm, but if it hadn't been for her, with all those kids, I don't know what my aunts would have done.

I remember it was Easter and everybody got some new clothes. I was working for the telephone office and I sent Charles and Cub and Mama over to get a new outfit and I was supposed to go after work. I had used up my credit and so my grandmother called me and said "you go on over and get yourself a new outfit," and she gave me the money. So she was like that.

Crawford: Was she affectionate?

Teagarden: Well, she had a lot to do. She had a bakery one time before she had the restaurants. She rented a big old house, and we sold bread--all the kids. We all had wagons, and we got a penny a loaf for going out and we sold it up and down the neighborhood and it was easy because we went to the same houses every day and everybody took it. That was our commission--a penny a loaf.

Crawford: That must have been a wonderful time for you.

Teagarden: Yes, it was. Then she started leasing dining rooms in the old hotels.

Then later on I think my grandmother bumped into an oven or something and got a big sore on her heel that didn't heal, and she didn't pay much attention. And then the doctors, I don't know if they could help now or not, but she died. I think it was blood poisoning or something. She was seventy-two.

After she died--I was about thirteen--my mother and my aunt; they just weren't business people, and it wasn't any time before they went broke.

Helen Teagarden

Teagarden: And Mama, she was not a disciplinarian at all. My brothers would always kid her. She'd try to tell Cub, the youngest brother, some things she thought boys ought to know, and he'd laugh at her and say, "I learned all that when I was four."
[laughter]

But we sort of just grew. We loved each other and none of us would have thought of sassin' our mother. And if Mama was too busy, we'd go to my aunt. It didn't make any difference, because both of them were there in the restaurant. But they had so much to do that we just grew.

I got a job at the telephone office while I was still in school. That was about all the money we had, because Mama was working for our board and room. I think she made about \$10 a week.

Crawford: Didn't you have some musical jobs when you were about fourteen?

Teagarden: Yes, but I didn't get much til I went to Roswell, New Mexico, when I was seventeen. I stayed five years there, and I taught too. Cub was a drummer in the same band. I stayed too long, but I was making good money and in New Mexico I was by far the best. Our rent was \$30 a month and I was working four-five nights and teaching about thirty pupils.

Crawford: Did you give classical lessons?

Teagarden: Classical if they didn't know how to read, and then more popular things.

Crawford: How about your own lessons?

Teagarden: Mama just started us on music lessons. When we were in Chappell, she said, "Now I'm going to give everybody lessons, yours will be Tuesday and Charles, yours will be Wednesday" and that lasted about two weeks. She'd be ironing or something and she'd yell out "that's a B flat," or something, when she heard us make a mistake, and that's the way it was.

But they had school orchestras. I played the violin, and Cub and Charles played in the school bands too.

Mama played a little trumpet, too. She could pick up anything and do something on it. She'd just play around with it until she could. She'd go to a pawn shop and buy a little horn or something, and a first grade book, and she'd learn the fingering, and it wouldn't be any time until she could play some things on it.

But she mostly just started us out, and we went on by ourselves.

Crawford: Did she want you to be musicians?

Teagarden: I don't think she cared. She wanted us to be happy.

Crawford: What was her second husband's name, and how long were they married?

Teagarden: His name was Bright, and I think they were married about a year or so.

Crawford: What special times do you remember?

Teagarden: Oh, there are so many special times I wouldn't know where to begin. She was a real cutie. Mama was so easy to get along with. It was like having four extra pair of hands around the house. She lived with me, you know, all the time before I got married, and then she lived with her sister until she died, and then moved to Las Vegas in her eighties and died when she was

about 92. But I can't ever remember having a cross word with Mama.

Crawford: Were her sisters musical?

Teagarden: They had a lot of talent. I had a cousin with a beautiful voice, and her son is a beautiful musician. He's the lawyer. Have you ever heard anybody sing so beautiful that you cried? That's what she did, when we'd go back and listen to her sing in the church.

Crawford: What are your earliest memories of her? You would have been born when she was about twenty-three.

Teagarden: Yes. Well, I once asked Mama when I was older, "Mama, didn't you just feel like you wanted to jump off a cliff?" Four kids and it was a hard time and she was twenty-eight. She said there were times when she felt like that, and if it hadn't been for us, she probably would have.

It was a tough life for her and I'm so glad she had things so much easier later on when she lived with us and she didn't have anything to worry about. She worked awfully hard, but I'd hear them down in the restaurant, it'd be eleven o'clock at night and they got up at four to start breakfast, but they'd be in the kitchen cleaning up and everybody would be laughing, and I used to think, "how in the world can they do it?"

Nobody drank then, because it was a dry state, and we just didn't get it much, but the iceman gave Mama some gin one time, and I'd played a job and I drove in the parking lot and Mama was on about the third floor of this old hotel, and she leaned out the window when I was down there and waved this bottle of gin and she said: "If gin makes you feel this way, hooray for gin!" [laughter] She was real cute.

Crawford: She liked the gin?

Teagarden: Yes. It was really funny. My brothers went on the wagon-- Charles and Jack had always been heavy drinkers, you know--and they'd go on the wagon and Mama and I weren't drinking at all, but we'd sit there and have a cocktail and those two weren't drinking at all.

Crawford: Does that necessarily go with a musician's life?

Teagarden: Well, it was their life at the time. That was the era--there wasn't much marijuana at the time, not like it was later. In fact, Gene Krupa served a jail term for having some at the time, but they all drank quite a bit. In the Paul Whiteman Band.

Crawford: Did they give it up for good?

Teagarden: No, Charles did, but Jack went back to it before he died. He was drinking the last six months he was living, but he sure stayed off it a long time.

Crawford: What sort of advice did your mother give you?

Teagarden: Oh, if I'd buy something she'd be afraid I was getting in too deep. Buying a car, buying a new piano, those kinds of things. She'd be worried about it. She was always very conservative. She had to be, I guess. Did I tell you about Mama working at Douglas Aircraft during the war?

Crawford: No.

Teagarden: She saved all her salary except \$54 a year, and somebody was always teasing her. Jack'd say: "What did you do with that \$54, Mama?" He wanted to know what she did with all that money!

Extended Family

Teagarden: Charles was awfully good to Mama when I moved her to Las Vegas after her sister died. We could have either moved her up here or over there, and Las Vegas had a lot cheaper places to live than here. So she went there. Charles and LaNora--everybody was real good to her. Mama liked all her daughter-in-laws. The last one [Jack's wife] wasn't as close to Mama as the first one--but nobody ever had any mother-in-law problems with Mama.

Crawford: I'm sure. How about son-in-laws?

Teagarden: Oh, she liked them too. There was no problem with that.

Crawford: Would you mention all of the daughter-in-laws?

Teagarden: Sure. LaNora was married to Charles. Irene was married to Cub. Ora was Jack's first wife. Claire Manzi was his second. Then Billie. That was very unfortunate, one of those spur-of-the-moment things, when he was drunk.

She got divorced when he was on the road, and she got a huge divorce settlement. They borrowed money from Joe Glaser, and got rid of her. She was a telephone operator in a hotel and she was always after him. And then Addie was his last wife, and they were married for a long time. He met her in the forties, and it was a stormy on-again-off-again affair, but they were devoted and she went everywhere he did and managed the business. They had Joe, the one you met.

There were two boys by Ora, the first wife. One is in Texas and the other died. Both were playing, picking up the trumpet and the trombone, and shouldn't have. They were always compared to Charles and Jack from the first day, and they didn't stay with it. The one in McQueeney, Texas, was an oil scout, and the other managed hotels. The son of Jack, Jr., who died, is Robert. He has a rock group and makes guitars. He works with a European craftsman, and they do special orders from all over the world. I see his mother in Sacramento--she comes to my festival--Mary Teagarden.

But I adore LaNora, and Charles did too. They had a good marriage.

Crawford: Which of you took after your mother the most?

Teagarden: In disposition--I couldn't say. I think Mama and I were the closest to each other, just because I was the only girl and the oldest one home for a long time. Yes--I'm sure it was me.

The Teagarden Brothers

Crawford: How about the boys--could you describe them?

Teagarden: I think Charles and I were the closest in disposition. We were both steady people who tried to work hard. Charles especially, and yet it's hard to say because Cub turned out to be a real hard worker and meticulous in everything he did too.

Charles was a perfectionist; Jack was moody--real sweet but moody. We used to tease him that he was more like my aunt Edna that my mother lived with before she died. You know the one that had the superior court judge. But he was more like her than he was Mama. But Mama and Aunt Barb were just happy people. Happy over nothing, really. It was nice.

But gosh, they were wonderful. Cub, for instance, when I went to Pasadena and had that throat operation, Cub and Irene moved in with us while I was recuperating at home, and Cub came in one night from work and he started crying and he said he wished it had been him instead of me. He was as sweet as he could be.

And Charles was--well, you had to work real hard to keep up with him. He set such high standards for himself that you just about had to. Boy, Jack toed the line when he was with Charles. Yes, he did. When Charles played, he just poured himself into it so much, that you couldn't coast with him. Jack got a hernia and it was hard to blow that hard to keep up with Charles when we were on the road.

But if you ever listened to Charles play, the notes just spewed out like a whole lot of vitamin B or something. He never missed anything--his technique was just phenomenal.

Not very many people know about Charles--not the public. Most of the musicians do--but he was a wonderful trumpet player. I think both of them were very modest. They never gave themselves credit for being who they were. As good as they were. They never did.

And Cub, when he got out of the Army he was married to a dancer [Irene], and she was gone most of the time. He decided to get out of the music business and he went to work with the telephone company--General Telephone--and he worked up to the head of personnel in Santa Monica in the main office.

Then he went to Riverton, Wyoming, with Utah Construction and they had pretty close to 500 employees there, and he stayed a couple of years there and then Kennecott hired him and they had about 12,000. Cub, bless his heart, he got the job he worked so hard to get, and his health failed him, so he gave it up.

Crawford: Were you especially close to him?

Teagarden: Well, yes. Cub and I had been working together, and we didn't get in on that New York bonanza that Jack and Charles did in the late twenties and thirties. So he and I were barnstorming around Texas and New Mexico, and Irene was singing with the band too, so I was closer to him at that time.

Crawford: It was great to hear the recording of all of you in Monterey. I think that was in 1963, and your mother played with you.

Teagarden: Yes. I wish Cub had been there too.

Crawford: At that performance you were introduced as "the real artist in the family."

Teagarden: I think it was Charles who said that. Yes, it was Charles. But that was a real nice thing we got to do, and I'm glad it came out in a CD.

Crawford: You are all good storytellers. How did that develop?

Teagarden: Well, I've got tapes of Jack that are very interesting when he was talking to somebody. The sound isn't very good, but he just had so many things happen to him; all those years on the road. I can't think of any place that he hadn't been. He was in Europe for a while, too.

Oh, we were talking about Earl Hines. Jack said when Earl just hated to fly and when he went to Europe he walked all the way there. He never would sit down.

Louis Armstrong and Race Relations in the South

Teagarden: Jack ran into problems in the South that he wouldn't run into today, I don't think. With being the only white man in that band for quite a while. Jack said that he'd get into a town and the hotels open to blacks would be just fleabags. He'd get friends to take them in.

Crawford: I imagine you ran into that kind of thing too.

Teagarden: Well, I did, because Mary Lou Williams was a friend of mine and our landlady almost made us move because she didn't believe in colored people coming in.

Crawford: You told me she asked you to shop for her because she couldn't go in all the stores.

Teagarden: She couldn't. They wouldn't wait on you or they'd show you the worst thing they had. It was sad. I heard that Lena Horne's daughter swam in the pool in Las Vegas and they drained the pool. Can you imagine? No, I can't imagine why they wouldn't be awfully bitter.

Crawford: Did you find that with Mary Lou Williams or Louis Armstrong?

Teagarden: No, they didn't seem to be. Louis might have been inwardly, but he sure hid it. And of course so many people loved him, that for anyone who was prejudiced, he would have met so many people who weren't.

Crawford: Was he discriminated against?

Teagarden: Oh, sure. But Louis decided that he wasn't going to ruin his life. He told Tony Bennett that he was a white man's nigger, and that he was going to take it. I think it hurt him. He tried not to let it, though. He had so much success, that made up for a lot of picayune things he had to go through.

I realized too that in the South a lot of hotels wouldn't take them, and I remember that Arville Shaw, the bass player, married a girl from Sweden, and she didn't know what she was getting into when she came over here, and he had to leave her in New York because he couldn't go into the Southern states with her. Mixed marriages just were not done in the South.

Crawford: Well, that's one way in which we've taken a step ahead.

Teagarden: Yes, a big step forward, and I know a lot of people resent it. One thing about musicians, though, I don't think they've ever been prejudiced like that, because too many black people have great ability and so you meet them on a different level altogether. You have something to talk about, and you have something in common, and nine times out of ten, they are wonderful musicians too. People like Art Tatum--there are so many you don't know where to start.

Crawford: Jack and Louis Armstrong had one of the first black-white collaborations of that sort, didn't they? Were they very close friends?

Teagarden: Yes, they were. I knew Louis well, and Willie "the Lion" Smith and Art Tatum, and Fats Waller--he made some records with Jack too. He was kind of an idol of every piano player. You wonder how people get so great. It's a way to believe in reincarnation. Somebody who can play so fast. How he could learn that in one lifetime! I read that some piano players can play ninety-seven notes a second.

Crawford: Can you do that?

Teagarden: I don't think so. [laughter]

I think that New York was a little better than Oklahoma City, too, [in terms of race problems] at that time. And then the fellows could go places everywhere that I couldn't.

For instance in Oklahoma City--after the job they could go down to Deep Two, as they called it.

Crawford: What was Deep Two?

Teagarden: Deep Two was Harlem in Oklahoma City. It was on Second Street so they called it Deep Two. And they'd go down there after hours and fool around, but women couldn't, so I was left out of that kind of thing. I just wouldn't be in place there at all.

Crawford: Was that often the case when you played with the band?

Teagarden: Well, after hours, a lot of time I didn't really want to mess around with them anyway. I didn't drink--they didn't drink much either, but they certainly had access to it. I really didn't care--I would carry Better Homes and Gardens pictures with me, magazines and things, and I had my nose in House Beautiful all the time. I needed to be settled down. And when we came out to California, we all did that--we all had houses--Cub and Charles and Jack did too.

(NB: material from this chapter has been placed later in the text for clarity).

II JAZZ IN THE TWENTIES

[Interview 1: March 18, 1991] ##

Austin High Gang

Crawford: Today let's back up a little and talk about jazz in the 1920s, and particularly about the Southwest. How would you describe jazz as it was growing up in the 1920s?

Teagarden: Well, the jazz I was playing was the little stock arrangements. You buy those and there are parts for everybody. The bands I was with were the little stock bands, and they kept up with everything that came out.

In Texas, that was a wonderful band that Peck Kelley had down there, but then I was only about nine and wasn't playing then. There is a lot of it down there but I wasn't doing it, not in New Mexico. In New Mexico it was a kind of a dance band and they played all the Kiwanians and DeMolay and Job's Daughters, that kind of thing. In a small way it'd be like Ernie Hechscher.

Crawford: What was your exposure to music from New Orleans and Chicago-- was there much crossover?

Teagarden: I felt more at home with Chicago things, because I think most of the black musicians earlier were around New Orleans, and they did a lot more of the blues then and the Chicago outfit

was more of a swing group. Benny Goodman and the Austin High Gang.

Crawford: Oh, then Jimmy McPartland was part of that.

Teagarden: Yes, Jimmy came from there, and Bud Freeman, Benny Goodman, and Joe Sullivan and that whole group that were just such superb musicians. I got to know all of them pretty well. I was so sorry to hear about Bud Freeman and Jimmy dying within a couple of days of each other.

Crawford: I read it in the newspapers. I know they were good friends of yours.

Teagarden: Yes. Jimmy had been with us on the road in the 1940s before he went to England and before he ever met Marian. So he was a great part of our family, and then in the 1940s I knew Bud Freeman in New York. He used to be at Jack's place a lot. He came around the apartment, and he was a very interesting, very intelligent person. I played a thing in Indianapolis a couple of years ago, and he was on the same job. I've got some pictures, some snaps of us sitting around talking, that I'll show to you.

Crawford: Most women who play jazz also sing. Was that true of you at some time?

Teagarden: I used to sing, but I had a thyroid operation in 1948, I talked about that a little before, and they had to reroute the vocal cords. I never had any range after that, so I've never been able to sing since then. I miss that, because it made it a lot easier if you could.

Women in Jazz

Crawford: Do you think it was harder for you to have a career in music because you were a woman?

Teagarden: Well, it was not as hard for me as it would have been if it weren't for my family, because my brothers were so well known and had so many friends that everybody was nice to me. Because I belonged to them, I think. So I had less trouble than a lot

of them, but I'm sure that at the start when you need experience, it's hard to get it when you're a woman. They take you when they can't get anybody else--you're at the bottom of the barrel. [laughs] It's still not easy--it's easier for piano players--but it's not easy for horn players, and there aren't a lot of jobs.

There used to be a few girls' bands--Fred Waring, Ina Ray Hutton, Ada Leonard, Sweethearts of Rhythm--several of them, but not compared to what the other musicians had. They never had big names like those did.

Crawford: Was Mary Lou Williams's experience a lot different from yours?

Teagarden: Well, Mary Lou was with Andy Kirk when I first met her in Oklahoma City, and they were all colored bands and they lived differently and thought differently. But as I said, I felt sorry for Mary Lou. She couldn't go buy clothes in good places and I used to go in and pick out things for her. It was tough but she'd such talent and every musician who ever heard her admired her so. And she was a good arranger. She made a lot of arrangements for good bands. So Mary Lou had more respect than most women.

But she didn't have any homing instincts. She lived in hotels and ate in restaurants. She never tried to keep house, never had any children, and just didn't want anything different.

Crawford: What was she like?

Teagarden: Well, she was a very religious girl. When she visited out here and we'd have lunch, she would have me take her to the Catholic Church by the Palace Hotel, where she was working. She would go through all those stations.

I had a couple of her things that were too modern. I couldn't get it--avant garde and that kind of thing. But she was very versatile and a good arranger.

Crawford: What was her style of playing?

Teagarden: She played a lot of boogie woogie things in the 1930s, but she was versatile. She eventually became quite modern. She was an

excellent arranger, had perfect pitch, and every musician, white or black, had a lot of admiration and respect for her.

Then Dorothy Donegan was doing real well. She practiced hours and hours a day.

Crawford: Had she studied a lot of classical music?

Teagarden: Yes, and she turned that into jazz. She's flashy, in a nice way. She was on Marian McPartland's show, and when she finished playing Marian said, "Wow!" [laughter] Marian is much more restful.

Marian is a very modern player, also has written a number of piano solos. She is very talented and competent. She prefers a concert setting, and she won't play if there is any noise or distraction going on. Once Ed Moose was in New York where she was playing, and she said, "Is Norma still working in that terrible, noisy place?" Ed said he didn't have the nerve to tell her he owned it!

Then there was Hazel Scott, a boogie woogie player and she was married to a senator for a while. I don't remember which one. But they were all negro--black girls--and I didn't know many white players. I just wasn't acquainted with them.

Crawford: Did you know Lil Hardin?

Teagarden: Yes. She was cute. She played intermissions for us at the Hangover Club.

Crawford: She was married to Louis Armstrong?

Teagarden: Yes. I'll tell a story. Louis was in a nightclub one night and the light shone on him and he introduced Lil on his right as "my wife" and Lucille on my left as "my wife." Lil was married to him before Lucille.

Louis said in an article that Lil had pulled a gun on him. "I never had a gun," she told him, and he said that he'd wanted to make it colorful. If you wanted to make it colorful, why didn't you tell them about when you were in jail?" she said. He was in a reform school as a child, and that's where he learned to play, so I guess that's what she was talking about.

Peck Kelley and Music in Texas

Crawford: We started to talk about Peck Kelley. What was his playing like?

Teagarden: Well, he was so far ahead of his time. Every band that ever came to Houston tried to get him. Paul Whiteman tried to get him; Tommy Dorsey. Everybody did. But he didn't want to leave his mother and his father. So he just stayed there and he was just one of those geniuses that comes along in a great while.

Crawford: You went to live in Galveston at some point to be with the band?

Teagarden: Some time or other, it must have been around 1922, we went down to Galveston and stayed with Jack, and Mama boarded the band. It was during the time of the restaurants and we would move back and forth.

But Peck Kelley was such a wonderful piano player, and I met people there that I still see once in a while. There was a clarinet player down there named George Hill, and he used to take us down to the beach, the three of us, and at night we'd go down when Jack was playing. It was a big ballroom and it had those lights, those mirror lights. But beautiful ballrooms, and that's where the band would be playing.

It must have been in a hotel, because there was a circular seat with something in the middle. I remember sitting out there and listening to the band. I didn't realize how great that band was because I was too young.

Crawford: He didn't record much, did he?

Teagarden: No. I have one record of his, though. He didn't want to leave Texas because of his parents, and after they died his eyesight got real bad, and he got to be pretty much a recluse.

Crawford: What was it like, boarding the band?

Teagarden: I don't remember too much about it. I was awfully young--nine or ten. And then, after a time we'd move back to Grandma's

again. Every time it didn't work out too well, we'd go back to her. [laughter]

Peck Kelley was sort of a father figure to Jack, and I think when he first left he was about fifteen, and went to San Angelo, where I had an uncle--a saxophone player--he had a band down there. So Jack went down and joined him, and I don't think he was very happy there. He left and went to San Antonio, and then he went to Galveston and joined Peck. I think Peck had a band that was the caliber that Jack liked, and by the time he got there, I think he must have been sixteen or seventeen.

But Peck Kelley was more of a father figure to Jack than a fellow musician, and they both had a deep friendship with each other. And every time we went back to Houston, that's the first thing Jack would do--look him up.

Crawford: I remember you telling Marian McPartland that your mother always took in musicians, and that she liked to entertain them by singing. Did she have a good voice?

Teagarden: Yes, Mama had a nice voice.

Crawford: Did you always have musicians around?

Teagarden: Oh, yes. During the Depression a lot of times musicians didn't have a job or any money, and they could always come and eat in the restaurant. Charles told me before he died that there's some fellow that Mama fed back then that sent \$10 every Christmas to her.

Crawford: Was Texas jazz distinctive?

Teagarden: Yes. We didn't have radio or records or anything, and so the way you played was pretty well set before you had a chance to listen to anything. And then later, when you did get records, you more or less refined the way you played, and I'm sure you got better, but the influence of other musicians when you first started were the ones you more or less ended up playing like.

Crawford: What were the dominant bands then, in the twenties? Bands like the Jazz Bandits?

Teagarden: There was a band called the Southern Trumpeters. When I was in my twenties I moved back, and the bands we were all crazy about were--well, Ben Pollack had a band, and then they ended up with Bob Crosby--they hired him to front the band. So that was the band we admired so much, and there were a lot of them, Will Bradley and Jan Savage. Oh, there was Guy Lombardo who we all hated--we hated all those Mickey Mouse things.

Crawford: Did you play with black jazz bands?

Teagarden: No, they didn't mix very much. Jack and Charles, when they went to New York, did, but not in Oklahoma and Texas. Mary Lou Williams had known Jack in New York too, and other places.

Working with a Territory Band in New Mexico: 1928

Crawford: Tell me more about working in New Mexico. Were you about seventeen when you went from Oklahoma City to work in a territory band?

Teagarden: Yes, and I was teaching too. That's why I could get away in the summer. One summer Cub and I spent with the Pollack Band in Denver, and then one summer we spent in Chicago and one in New York. I was out there about five years and then I moved back to Oklahoma City.

I shouldn't have stayed out there so long, but I was making so much better money, and Cub stayed there too, and the rent was about \$30 a month, and I was working four or five nights a week and teaching. I had about thirty pupils over a week.

Crawford: Did you teach any classical?

Teagarden: I taught basic classical if they didn't know how to read, but I mostly did more popular things.

Crawford: Did you do a fair amount of touring?

Teagarden: Yes, we did. You know, you had some long jumps to make, but you were out that night and back the next. The towns were far

apart and we'd listen to Benny Goodman's "Let's Dance" and Paul Whiteman's Old Gold and Chesterfield programs.

And then when Cub and I went back to Oklahoma City we joined the band and we were on the road for a while, and Irene (they weren't married at the time) was a dancer with the band. They got married in Pampa, Texas, when we down there were in the territory band. It wasn't bad, but we were just getting by.

I was closest to Cub at the time because the rest of them were so far away. But Cub and I, we just had a tougher time than they did. Then later on, after I went to Long Beach, Cub and Charles were in the army, and we worked together a lot in Hollywood, and then I got close to all of them.² I was always close to them, but Cub and I were closest.

Crawford: Were you just too young to go off to New York?

Teagarden: I didn't have the nerve to do it. There wasn't as many chances for a woman, and I was scared too. And the competition was scaring me too. But I was there the summer of 1933 or '34, it's real hard for me to think back that far. I wasn't thinking of staying, because in Roswell, I was by far the best, if you know what I mean. I didn't have any competition.

And in New York, everybody I heard played better than me, I thought. Everybody I met there was connected with the top people. They weren't playing in the little dives, you know.

So they were the cream of the crop. But I stayed too long in New Mexico just because it was so easy. I had a good time out there. It was a small town and I had so many friends. Everybody just kind of adopted me.

There was the owner of the Greyhound buses--his wife took lessons from me--and when he had a bus delivery to the East he'd give me a ride up to Oklahoma City. But a brand new bus would come by the house and pick me up.

After leaving New Mexico one of my first jobs was with Les Jenkins, who had been with Tommy Dorsey and had just left Freddie Martin. I found I had a lot to learn, but they were patient with me.

²Cub and Charles were in the Ferry Command; Jack was over age.

Style and Influences ###

Crawford: What about your own style?

Teagarden: Oh, I don't know. Usually when people write about me they call me a kind of swing piano player.

Crawford: Stride?

Teagarden: Yes, but I don't really know what to call me. I guess sort of mainstream. I try to play in the middle of things. I can't play real modern piano, and I think the kind of piano I play has more left hand.

Crawford: You have a great left hand.

Teagarden: Thank you--more left hand and I don't have the technique that a lot of these young piano players have in the right hand. I have to think both hands at the same kind of inner movement, and if I did a lot with my right hand, then I couldn't do it with my left.

Crawford: Don't most players favor the melody hand--the right hand?

Teagarden: Yes. They're used to having a bass player with them all the time. I wasn't used to having a bass player, and I love having one now, but some players don't really like to have a bass player--that have a lot of left hand, because they're playing different notes down there and that bothers them.

Crawford: I remember you and Marian McPartland talking about doubling.

Teagarden: Yes, Marian is used to having a bass player. She said she couldn't imagine playing without one. But she plays a different type of thing altogether.

Crawford: What was their relationship like, Marian and Jimmy McPartland?

Teagarden: They had the funniest divorce. They were such good friends that they stored music at each other's place, took care of each other's cats, and talked on the phone nearly every day.

She left him because he was drinking, and then he stopped and they overcame everything. But she kept her own place.

Their styles of playing were different. Marian was more modern than Jimmy, and she was more financially successful. But he got her started, and introduced her to everybody in New York. But she would have ended up there anyway.

I admire her because not only is she a good musician but also a good business person too. She'd never blow a job. Just recently she started turning her radio program into VCRs. It's a good idea, and Marian will do real well with it. I have some of the music she's written that's real nice. I've never learned hot jazz.

Bill Evans is her idol. I've got a couple of his books. They're difficult, but very pretty. It's not a style I'd be good at, but I'm getting a kick out of working my way through some of that stuff. I could fit in more with Dave McKenna and Ralph Sutton, and of course Dick Hyman.

Crawford: Who influenced you?

Teagarden: I can't tell you. I don't think anyone particularly did. When I came to California, then I met a lot of piano players and I was crazy about the way they played, but I don't know that we influenced each other. Stan Wrightsman was one of them, and Charles Lavere was a real good friend of ours--he was from Oklahoma City.

I really admired a lot of piano players when I came out here. But I never listened to a lot of records at that time. There weren't a lot of recordings, but I was thinking the other day that in Oklahoma City we'd work until two o'clock--nine til two and nine til one on Sundays. We worked seven days a week and we never had a night off, and it'd be real hot in the hotels where we stayed.

Mama had the dining room in the hotels at that time and so we'd go outside in the park and it'd be three o'clock and they had those little Victrolas and you'd wind them up and we'd listen to records out there and it was so nice. We listened to Crosby, Casa Loma, Ray Noble, Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller.

I'm sorry people can't do that any more because it's dangerous. But music wasn't recorded so much in the twenties. You see, most of it was live.

Crawford: People didn't stay home as much.

Teagarden: No. No, they sure didn't. The world has changed so much!

Crawford: That's why hearing you play at the Washington Square Bar & Grill is so special, even if it's noisy at times.

Teagarden: Well, I'm glad you think so--it's a nice place to be--so informal and everything. I wouldn't like being in a place that's too quiet for too long. I would worry about no business or something. I can stand the noise!

Crawford: You don't want everybody listening all the time?

Teagarden: Well, that part would be nice. I appreciate it when somebody comes in and I feel that they're listening. But it's hard working in a place where business is bad. Because when business is bad it's always the band, and when it's good it's always the cooks! [laughter]

Crawford: I'll remember that. The next time I'll tell them, "I don't come for the food--I come for the piano!"

Teagarden: That's nice.

Crawford: Norma, your mother taught you piano, and you say you don't have all the technique you'd like?

Teagarden: Yes, she taught us all the basics, and I used to do a lot of Chopin and things, and I like Debussy, and I used to do quite a few things and I enjoyed it. But that stuff is a different technique altogether, and it just doesn't work if you work at it--it's so subtle, all notes, you know, it's very written, and you have to study it in such detail.

I remember I was working on a Haydn sonata that I liked, and I decided to go to a teacher and get her opinion, and I realized she had started marking about every two-three bars of things where I didn't lift my hand enough or the touch wasn't quite right, this sort of thing. And classical music is like that; it's like classical ballet.

Crawford: Players like Dorothy Donegan always put in a little Rachmaninoff, but you don't do that.

Teagarden: No, I don't. But I have a book of hers, and it's a whole lot of classics she's worked out. I haven't thought about it. I'd like to do more of it alone, but I don't have the time to practice that much. Maybe I should say I don't take the time. I do pretty well if I get in an hour a day, and I don't always do that every day by any means.

Crawford: It doesn't show! Anything else about Texas, and why it was so prominent?

Teagarden: Well, I don't know why but there was some very good musicians that came from there, and Oklahoma too. Like I told you, when I came out here I thought everybody would be a whole lot better, but I found out that the ones I had been playing with were about as good as these were. Except for some of the studio musicians, that was a different thing, but I'm talking about the average run of musicians in clubs and things, were just as good if not better.

But the good ones, you see, the money was so bad there. It didn't cost too much to live but you didn't make anything, and the first job I got when I came out to California--I'd been making \$28 a week, and this was seven nights a week, and I was making \$35 on a radio program I was working on for Oklahoma Gas & Electric, and anyway, that was just sixteen weeks and then off, but \$28 dollars was what I made, and when I came out here within a week, the first job offered was \$50 and I took that, and somebody came along and offered me \$75. And it kind of shot up. This was in '42.

And then Jack, he was paying \$125, and this is double salary because I was married at the time, so it didn't take long to get us on our feet.

New York and Paul Whiteman: 1933

Crawford: You first went to New York in '33 to visit Jack and Charles?

Teagarden: Yes, they were recording with everybody that was around, and Charles was--I should dig out his biography because he did so many shows. Thousands Cheered and Cabin in the Sky, and No, No, Nanette, Girl Crazy. I think Jack did that too, with Ben Pollack. That's before they joined Whiteman.

Later when they joined Whiteman Johnny Mercer was one of the singers. I met Bud Freeman there with Babe Russin; his sister Sunny played piano. Johnny wrote "Fare Thee Well to Harlem" and "Christmas Night in Harlem" for Jack.

Crawford: Did Cub go with you when you went to visit in New York?

Teagarden: No, but he did when I went to Denver. Spent a summer with Jack when he was in Ben Pollack's Band. Such a great band: Ray Bauduc, Matty Matlock, Eddie Miller, Nappy Lamar, Charlie Spivak, Gil Rodin, Yank Lawson and Jack.

I still see those fellows, which is so much fun, because I was about seventeen then. Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart. Eddie Miller and Nappy LaMar, up until about a year ago, but they're gone now.

Crawford: What do you remember about Paul Whiteman?

Teagarden: Oh, he was crazy about Jack. He liked to go off with his real good drinking buddies. He gave an interview once for a dream band, if he could pick anybody in the world, and he picked Jack and he picked Charles, and I was so happy about that. He said that Charles was the only trumpet player that could play a first chair or a second chair, equally as well. Second chair does all the jazz solo work, and first chair is the lead trumpet, you know, everybody follows your phrasing, if you know what I mean.

So many people don't know much about Charles, and he was so great. It's because he didn't sing, you see, and he was a sideman in the bands he worked in and he wasn't known. Most musicians know him, but other people didn't. He made over three hundred records, played with Pollack, Harry James, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Bob Crosby, and a lot with Jack.

He had a band for a while, but gave it up, although eventually he had a small group in Las Vegas that was a favorite after hours place for all the Las Vegas headliners to

congregate. A thesis by Bruce Grimoldby called "Charles Teagarden: A Career in American Jazz" is at Washington State University in the history department.

And Cub, after he came to California, and after he got out of the army, he was married to a girl who had been a dancer, as I said, and she would go one place and he would go another, and he went back to school, and it wasn't very long--he was very intelligent and he worked real hard. And good-looking. He was the handsomest one in the family by far.

Marriages and Families

Crawford: How about children? Did Cub and Irene have children?

Teagarden: No, but they brought up a little girl that was really his wife's niece. Her mother was really not able to take care of her and so she was about eighteen months old when they brought her up. The mother would never let them adopt her--they wanted to--so legally they didn't have any children.

Crawford: How about Charles?

Teagarden: Charles married at nineteen. He married some Ziegfield girl--a beautiful girl. She was a show girl and he was young and she didn't want anyone to know she was married, not to hurt her career--you know, one of those kinds of things that wasn't too good for it, and so that didn't really work out. Drucilla Strain was her name. A beautiful name and a real name too. LaNora was his second wife.

And when he got in the army and got out in 1944 he hadn't had a date in about seven years, and my first husband introduced him to a girl he had met in a doctor's office and from then on Charles never dated anyone but her. And he has a son by that marriage. That is LaNora. And he had a daughter by his first marriage, but she died. I saw her once in New York but we never got to keep in touch with her.

Crawford: Did he become a musician?

Teagarden: The son? No. Only the one I mentioned in Dallas. As I told you, Jack had two boys by his first marriage--and this boy in Dallas is Jack's grandson. He's a guitar player and he works in a place that makes guitars. They get very, very expensive offers and then they sell to these rock stars. They get thousands of dollars for their guitars. They are hand made, so it's a kind of European craft. And he performs.

I'm not too familiar with him because I've only seen him a few times, but I know it's all rock stuff, because he has a lot of equipment with all the band stuff. I wish I could get to know him better. I don't know that I could help him, since the type of music he does is so different.

Crawford: How about your first marriage to Charles Gilruth?

Teagarden: I was married in Oklahoma City. He was out there; he'd come out with my brother, and they were just inseparable, he and Cub. One never went anywhere without the other, and I think that's why I married him. He was just always around.

Crawford: Might as well make a foursome?

Teagarden: Yes. He was a great guy. A typical musician--the house was always full of musicians and the records were all over the floor.

Crawford: Did you enjoy that?

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Teagarden: Yes, but they'd go out and play golf every day before I could catch them to empty the garbage or something. And I was doing all the arranging for the band and all the copying, and there were just so many people around, and my mother was living with me. Sometimes there'd be twenty-one shirts in the wash--

Some Hard Times in Oklahoma City

Crawford: You told me you were all living together because it was the Depression.

Teagarden: That's right.

Crawford: What were you making during that time. Do you remember?

Teagarden: In the early thirties I made around \$14 a week. At the beer gardens you could make \$2 a night and have your meal included. Rents were around \$30, and you could buy a house for \$5,000.

Crawford: Could you talk a little about your household?

Teagarden: Well, it was just a crazy household. Cub and Irene and her dad, and Mama, and Hotshot.

Crawford: Hotshot--Charles Gilruth--right? [laughter] Why Hotshot?

Teagarden: I haven't any idea. Just a nickname, and it stayed with him til he outgrew it. Of course it got pretty ridiculous, and the reason I say that is that his name was Charles and my brother was Charles, and I didn't want to get them mixed up.

And it seemed like I took care of all the income tax and all the business and I paid all the bills. He was generous--he'd do anything you asked him too--he'd give you his right arm. When we split up we tried to give each other everything. We were good friends after that. He never would have married again unless I did first. I paid his car payments and rent while he was convalescing after an operation, and I know he would have done the same thing for me if he could.

After we split up I got sick, and it'd been a big financial hassle because I had to put another mortgage on the house and we had saved up quite a bit of cash, but in order to cash out his half of things I had to give him half of things, the car too.

So I picked up an old second-hand jalopy that wouldn't go anyplace--it'd stop at night everywhere and I finally got rid of that. But anyway, I got sick and by that time he'd have given me back anything I needed, but he'd fooled around and it didn't last him long. I knew it wouldn't.

He had decided to go into a plastic tile business--he and several other musicians got down there, and none of them knew how to do it, so they'd sell these FHA contracts, and then they had to go out and hire people who did know how to do it,

otherwise they'd have to have it done over again. It didn't take them any time--it was one of those foolish things. They meant well, but--

Crawford: How long were you married?

Teagarden: From 1937 to 1948.

Crawford: You were in Oklahoma City until the 1940s?

Teagarden: Yes, we came out here in 1941.

Crawford: You said, "I took jobs my brothers wouldn't, because I couldn't stand being broke." Was that in Oklahoma City?

Teagarden: Yes. We'd gone on the road and the bandleader ran off with all the money. Everybody else had drawn so much, but I hadn't--I didn't want to draw. I wanted all my money.

Anyway, we woke up one morning in Dallas and the bandleader--the one they had hired--was gone, and so we got a ride home in a truck and it was December. When we got back, Mama had a room in somebody's house downtown, close in, so I went there. But that's when I went to work in a dancing school and worked at night too.

Jack and Charles Teagarden: Living High in New York

Crawford: Well, the boys in New York must have been doing pretty well at that time, weren't they?

Teagarden: Oh, they were just going real high. Charles had a plane, and he was about nineteen or twenty. At that time there was so little income tax too, and their living expenses were practically nothing--almost a joke. They'd make \$300 or \$400 a week when they were paying \$12 for a room.

So Charles had a plane, and before he married he had two Ziegfield girls on each side there, and he was a cute kid and so young. You know, the kid from Oklahoma who came up to New York and was immediately shot up into the best of things. In fact, I think he let it go to his head a little bit as far as

Cub was concerned. The difference between their lives, and there wasn't that much different in their talent, you know. It was just kind of the breaks.

And then later on, though, when Charles got in the Army and they got that little salary, they were really scrambling around. I was doing pretty good by that time. Anyway, Charles met LaNora in the forties, and he settled down and turned out to be a terrific guy. And we were all very close then.

Crawford: I guess everybody wanted to go in the Army.

Teagarden: Oh yes, they were all dying to. Marian McPartland and I were talking about that on her show. Jimmy was in the band at the same time, when everybody left and went in the Army. But he wanted to go as a private, and so he didn't enlist as a musician.

The rest of them wanted to go as musicians, because that's what they wanted to do, and it was a little more cushy a life than a foot soldier. But Marian said that after Jimmy had been in a while he changed his mind and started doing USO work. That's where she met him--in Europe.

III LOS ANGELES IN THE 1940s

Playing in San Pedro

Crawford: Who went first out there?

Teagarden: Charles and Cub. We followed them two or three months later. We had the big gas rationing out here and we couldn't get tires. It was a terribly difficult time, and we just barely made it out here to California.

We couldn't get gas when I was on the road with Jack either. It was real hard. The supplies--we had meat rationing and sugar and everything.

I told you the second job I was offered was \$75 a week when I came, and it was in San Pedro and I didn't have gas to go. Musicians were class--were at the bottom. That was nonessential. So I had to catch an electric train, and I caught a bus, and then the electric train at six o'clock to get over there at eight. They closed at twelve and the buses stopped at twelve, but the Cal Shipyard was over there and the swing shift got off at one.

So I got off at twelve, and the people over at the club where I worked dropped me off at the filling station, and I waited there until the Cal swingshift bus came by, and sometimes you'd get out there and it'd be terribly foggy in the winter, and you'd be completely alone--the station was closed, you know. I wouldn't dare do that today, but sometimes it was weird then. But I was never afraid--it was lonely, and cold and disagreeable, but not scary. The swing shift bus would

take everybody to the electric train and I'd get that and get back to where I stayed.

So it'd take me about two and a half hours to go either way, but I got a Los Angeles union card out of it. You see, you have to wait six months before you can work when you move from one place to another, so I didn't have to because they couldn't get anybody to go over there from L.A. Long Beach was closer, so they offered me a card if I'd go and I did. And that got me in the union right away.

Crawford: What were union benefits then?

Teagarden: None. Now they have a pension plan, but that didn't start until after I wasn't working much. There's no health plan or insurance. It's a poor union. Dues here are a lot more than in New York, Las Vegas and probably Los Angeles. They cater to opera and symphony people. They don't pay any attention to side people. I haven't had a raise for so long I wouldn't know how to ask for one.

I pay 2 percent of my salary plus a yearly stipend. In Los Angeles after twenty-five years, you got a life membership. You also get \$1000 death benefit now.

Crawford: Were there separate unions for blacks and whites?

Teagarden: They were segregated when I came here in the fifties. They had a black union in Oakland, but I don't remember when it was put together.

Crawford: Could you perform with blacks then?

Teagarden: Yes, I could have if they asked me. It's them more than whites. They have different ideas about music and they like to play together. I'm used to bands with uniforms and things like that. There is a difference in their music, and they don't play the same tunes. That is today.

You know, I remember when Benny Goodman hired Teddy Wilson. He didn't care if he was black--he wanted the best musician he could get. But they never were easy with each other.

Crawford: What was Helen Teagarden doing then?

Teagarden: I think it wasn't very much longer that she went to work at Douglas Aircraft. She was working in the cafeteria, pretty quick after we got to California. She and her sister, and they both worked out there. They looked alike and they were always getting the bosses confused. One of the bosses would tell one of them to go somewhere and he'd tell the wrong one. [laughter]

Crawford: That was when Jack joked about her savings.

Teagarden: Oh, yes. He was kidding her about the \$54 of her salary that she couldn't account for. Yes, he sure used to tease her.

Crawford: Did he and Charles help you?

Teagarden: In the thirties they really didn't. Jack, because too many people got to him first. No, they didn't do as much. They were always going to--they'd come home and, "Oh, Mama, I'm going to do this for you; I'm going to buy you a house," you know. "She doesn't need a house, she needs \$5 a week every week," I'd keep trying to tell them.

But Charles gave Mama a beautiful car. The band was in Ft. Worth at the Ft. Worth Centennial--the Paul Whiteman Band came down there. Charles bought this LaSalle convertible while he was down there and decided he didn't want to keep it in New York so he gave it to Mama and she didn't put antifreeze in it and the motor froze. A gorgeous car.

But they'd do things like that for her that wasn't what she needed. Then later on they realized, and Jack by that time had been married two or three times and he was having alimony troubles, you know, and he had his hands full.

And then by that time Mama didn't need it. I was doing real well and everything was going well. After I got on my feet with the house and everything and had gotten over a couple of operations. It was 1948 and I had already been on the road with Jack then, and I was working in a club there and I had this lump on my throat--I had a whole bunch of things--that was just a horrible year, one thing after another, and I'd just come reeling out.

We had already had a divorce at that time, as I told you, and after I got started back again, I played that club--that burlesque house--it was a burlesque-type, and it was right

burlesque house--it was a burlesque-type, and it was right across the street from the Army base and they had a lot of soldiers that came there.

I was going to a philosophy class about that time and the philosophy teacher came over to the club one night and during the intermission I was talking to him in the restaurant and he said, "Do you just have to do this?" Those girls were strippers and things, and when I first went out there I was kind of horrified, and later on I got to know those girls and they'd be sewing and patching the clothes of their kids, if they had children, and they'd come out and do all these sexy dances.

It wasn't like it is now--they weren't topless--but it was risque for that time, and it was different. I never became good friends or that chummy with them, but I certainly respected them as individuals and changed my attitude about them. I knew I couldn't do it--I didn't have the personality, you know, or maybe the figure. [laughter]

All Together in Long Beach

Crawford: How long were you there and where did you live in Long Beach?

Teagarden: We bought a house in a section called Pennswood. It was a new section and all the houses were just alike. One of those tract things. We were out there about a year and we sold it and bought the house that I later lived in. It was a lovely place, a real nice home, and I loved it. A big place.

Crawford: Some of the architecture of that period was very charming, in Southern California.

Teagarden: Yes, it was a corner lot with a big lawn. A friend of mine was storing a grand piano with me and I had a grand piano, and the living room had two grands in it and didn't look crowded. And a dining room, and I had roomers after I got a divorce. I always rented out a room or two. And one elderly man who lived with us for a long time took care of the yard and helped Mama lift things or do things--because I was on the road. So we managed. We did pretty well--yes, we did.

It took me two or three years, and I had a new car--well, it was a year-old car--and a nice grand piano and some new furniture and I put money back in the bank. I worked hard. I was teaching in the daytime too when I wasn't on the road. Teaching and then working at night.

Playing in Hollywood: 1941-1952

Teagarden: For the first time in years and years during the war we were all together in Long Beach. Jack and I were on the road a lot, and Charles and Cub were in the Ferry Command. And they were stationed there in Long Beach. Cub and Charles enlisted with Clint Garvin and nine others from Jack's band.

Charles's blood pressure was high and they kept him in bed as much as they could until after he was tested, to be sure they didn't have to put him out. They did military music; they did everything. All these great studio musicians were in it from Hollywood; Ziggy Elman and Paul Smith.

Crawford: Everybody enlisted?

Teagarden: Oh, yes. Because they wanted to stay at home. They were very high salaried people in those studios. They made enormous money, and when they got in the army they were making twenty-one or whatever it was, but once they got in the army every second lieutenant's wife could order them to play for her tea. They sure resented it and I don't blame them!

Jack and Charles had made some pictures for the studios and Charles made one with Harry James when he was in the service, but the rest of the band were all studio men.

Crawford: What a musical operation Hollywood was in those days!

Teagarden: Yes, it was. It has cut down now, but they had beautiful things. Once in a while you notice some of the old movies had gorgeous violins there, but now it's all synthesizers and four musicians take the place of about forty.

Crawford: They kept that generation of musicians going.

Teagarden: Yes, they sure did.

Crawford: You played at Carnegie Hall in December of 1944, with Eddie Condon?

Teagarden: Yes, I appeared with the Condon gang: Bud Freeman, Bobby Hackett, Art Hodes, Gene Schroeder, Joe Marsala, Red McKenzie, Ralph Sutton.

Crawford: What was that like?

Teagarden: Just like anything else. I didn't have the sense to be scared!

Crawford: Anything you remember about the sound in Carnegie Hall especially?

Teagarden: Not particularly.

Crawford: During the war years, did you play in Hollywood?

Teagarden: I didn't play for the studios but I played in Hollywood. There was the Suzy Q, and the Hangover Club, where Red Nichols played and Pete Daley and most of the Bob Crosby band were around there, and Matty Matlock. He wrote the music for "Pete Kelly's Blues." He was a good arranger. Anyway, I worked Bob Zurkes's night off, and the guys got so they'd drop in.

Crawford: Was that your burlesque period, Norma?

Teagarden: That was a burlesque house--striptease!

Crawford: What went on? You might as well tell me now. [laughter]

Teagarden: Oh, girls with fans and things. They were strippers. Only I don't think they stripped as much as they do in Las Vegas.

Crawford: Was it sort of genteel?

Teagarden: Not particularly! [laughter] I don't think so.

Crawford: What did you play?

Teagarden: Dancing music for the girls, and then after the show was over we played dance music. But there was a restaurant there and they did an enormous business there during the war and

afterwards too. That was in Long Beach on Lakewood Boulevard right across from the air Base there.

Crawford: How did you travel?

Teagarden: Oh, by car.

Crawford: I'm guessing you worked late.

Teagarden: Oh, sure.

Crawford: How long did you have that job?

Teagarden: Oh, a couple of years. It was after I had my operation in 1948. The owner was a friend of mine. He was a piano player too. He came by the house and he said: "You can come to work for me and you can work one hour, two hours, and you can take as many nights as you want to and I'll take the rest of it."

Crawford: You were getting back on your feet then--you just told me that after six years you were sort of starting over.

Teagarden: Yes. And then I left with Jack's band in 1952. But I worked a lot of places in Long Beach. A lot of clubs.

Crawford: It must have been fun to have the family together.

Teagarden: Yes, it was. I sure hated it when it was over. Charles joined the Bob Crosby Band because he didn't want to go on the road, and Bob Crosby had that new tv show--national--so it was a big break for Charles. And so he left the band and Jack and I were still on the road, and he took his wife and little boy over to Las Vegas, and his little boy was about four then.

The air was so much cleaner over there and LaNora and the little boy had bronchial trouble and that cleared up, so after Charles had been with Crosby five years he decided to go over there and live.

And then after Cub got out he commuted to Santa Monica for a while, for several years, and then he sold his home and moved to Wyoming, so it didn't last too long. But it sure was great while it did. We got to spend Christmases and holidays together.

End of the Big Band Era

Crawford: Did the Paul Whiteman Band close down after the war?

Teagarden: Yes, I think a whole era just kind of folded. I don't know, but by the time the fifties came along, the music was changed--changed almost overnight it seemed like.

Rock and roll came in, and all these--Chubby Checkers and that kind of thing--and it seemed like you just woke up one day and everything had to be in smaller units. Of course, for one thing it cost too much to have a big band, and some people like Benny Goodman would carry two or three people--a drummer and a first trumpet and first saxophone player, probably, and his library, and then he'd go play "Benny Goodman and His Band" here and there, picking up local musicians to fill in.

Some people wouldn't do that. Count Basie never did and Woody Herman wouldn't do it, and that's the reason it was just so hard to keep going, because on the road it costs so much to keep your men. Their expenses are so high that the salary has to be high. People just can't pay it.

And so all the bands kept getting smaller and smaller, and six-piece bands got so they could do pretty good, and when we were on the road in the fifties, we'd work two weeks in a place and sometimes four, so that made it a lot easier. It's these one nighters. This other way, with two weeks you'd do a lot of driving, and one-nighters you don't have time to do that.

Playing with Jack Teagarden's Band: 1943-1946

Crawford: You played with Jack's band for the army?

Teagarden: Yes and it was really an experience. That many people at one time, and everybody having to eat at the same time, you know. He'd drop us in a restaurant with twenty of us, and we'd not have much time.

Crawford: Where did you play?

Teagarden: It'd take me a year to tell you where we played. It'd be easier to say where we didn't almost. [goes to get journal] Here--[April, 1945] we had a rehearsal in Hollywood; April 1st was MacClellan Field, Sacramento; April 3rd was Montague, California--stayed at the Eureka Inn. April 4th was Medford, Oregon; April 5th, Telemaque, Oregon; April 6th, Salem, Oregon; April 7th, Jansen Beach for a week; April 15, Congress Hotel in Portland; April 16th, Tacoma, Washington; April 17th, Everett, Washington; April 18th, Mount Vernon, Washington; April 19th, Whitley Island, Washington.

Crawford: What did a hotel cost in those days?

Teagarden: \$3, in Tacoma. I was making \$125. Let's see, Bellington Hotel, April 17, 18, 19, and 20, \$16. [laughter] Manhattan cocktails, \$3.50--I don't know! I must have been entertaining. At these prices, I couldn't have drunk that much. Mayflower Hotel, Seattle--\$5. That was getting up there. It was just getting more expensive--Walla Walla, \$5.

Baxter Hospital, three shows, then we were on our way to Canada. Now's here the Empress Hotel in Victoria, that's a world-renowned hotel, and that's \$6.50.

Crawford: Oh, look, I see "Mama's dress for Mother's Day."

Teagarden: Yes. \$11.78. And three pair of hose for \$3. And candy, 35 cents. I sure kept track! And I've got one here, Mayflower Hotel, \$28. We must have been there for several days. Free bond show, Mayflower Hotel--I think that's Tacoma.

We used to do those things all the time when we were on the road all the time. You know, make appearances at tv stations or radio or something.

Now, this is funny to me. Nan Blackstone was a nightclub entertainer, and cover charge was \$1.45. The bond show I worked at with Jack was an all-day show.

Crawford: That was for the war bond effort?

Teagarden: Yes, these were war bonds. We worked with Eddie Cantor; he was with us once. Bend, Oregon, May 28, and Albany, Oregon--their hotel was cheap--\$2! [laughter]

Crawford: Those were small towns. What kind of audiences did you get?

Teagarden: Most of this was Army. We were playing in armories and things. And here was an armory in Eureka, California, and that was at the Eureka Inn.

Crawford: Were those USO shows?

Teagarden: No, for the Army they were officers clubs and GI shows--regular GIs. We played Camp Hamilton near San Francisco, a free show. At the Californian Hotel I paid \$5 for that; that must have been San Francisco. The Army paid the bill at the Californian Hotel. We had a free show at Hanford that afternoon. June 6, Golden Gate Theatre.

The U.N. was formed at that time, and we were there, and there wasn't a room in this town. The girls and I finally got in one, but the boys stayed in the lobby of the theater three or four days.

Crawford: They slept in the lobby?

Teagarden: Yes.

Crawford: Well, the Golden Gate Theatre was a big theater for you, wasn't it?

Teagarden: Yes, they had a big stage show. I think Mildred Bailey was on that bill there. [We stayed at] the Padre Hotel; it was around the corner from the Golden Gate Theatre.

Crawford: Five days in advance, \$17.50. [laughter]

Teagarden: And a canteen show free. We did a lot of work like that. I've got a couple of little citations in here.

Here's where I had to pay them again. \$12.80. I guess we stayed a while. Murdock, California, June 14, Army Air Base; June 15, 16, 17, 18, San Diego, and the plane fare from San Diego to Long Beach was \$10.50. "Played free bond show and bought \$100 bond."

Crawford: What was your day like? Did you arrive together and rehearse before a performance?

Teagarden: No, unless it was for a floor show. You met a lot of people when you were on the road, but you didn't get to know them because you weren't there long enough. But the people you traveled with got to be like family. You got to be very close.

Crawford: Who was in Jack's band then?

Teagarden: Oh, goodness. There was one fellow that lives here. He joined the band when he'd just got out of high school. He's a career counselor at City College. Wally Wells. He was playing trombone, and I still see him once in a while. He belongs to the Bohemian Club and he plays with that band in Golden Gate Park about once a month. You know, Wally was just out of high school.

There was Nyle Davis, Jerry Redman and Vernell "Tex" Williamson on trumpets, sax player Bert Noah, Bob Short. In the smaller bands were Ray Bauduc, Kas Malone and Freddy Greenleaf, Kenny Davern, Jackie Coon. The front line would change. Bob McCracken played clarinet and sax, and Charles was with us for a while.

Kas and Ray were always there. But whenever they went on the road, they had to find people who could go along.

They had a terrific sense of humor, and they were just fun--young and a lot of laughs. Then sometimes we got a bus--one of those big buses like a Greyhound bus--and it made travel a lot easier, except trying to get that many people together at one time was hard.

Whenever you'd say, "The bus leaves at nine o'clock," they'd come straggling in at 9:30, you know, that kind of thing, and it'd throw us so late getting in to our job that we didn't have any time.

IV REMEMBERING THE GREATS OF JAZZ

[Interview 2: July 18, 1991] ##

The Ben Pollack Band

Crawford: Norma, we've been looking through your albums this afternoon, and I'd like to ask you to talk about some of the jazz artists you've worked with.

Teagarden: Well, one of the nicest things that I remember real well was Ben Pollack. At one time, he had by far the best jazz orchestra I think in the United States, and that isn't just me; I've got a lot of press clippings that say the same thing.

He had Glenn Miller; he had Harry James; he had Jack; he had Charlie Spivak; Ray Bauduc; Matty Matlock; Eddie Miller; all these people, and I was about seventeen I guess when we spent a summer with them in Denver, my kid brother and I did. And I thought anybody who could get to play with them--that'd be the most wonderful thing.

Years later, I came up here with Ben Pollack--it wasn't the big band, it was a small band, and I don't even remember where we played, but Charles was with me, my brother Charles, and Rolo Furniss I think was on the trombone, a guy named Gomez was on clarinet, and Benny was playing drums.

You know, it's a funny thing about someone like Benny Pollack. He came to Oklahoma City, and Cub and I were too

bashful to go see him. And then years later, he said he looked forward to coming there because he knew that's where we were, and it shows you how you can be so shy and not realize that somebody really wants to know you and everything. But we were just little kids, and Jack and Charles weren't with him yet.

Crawford: So he knew about the family?

Teagarden: Yes. And then later in Hollywood, I played with him several times. And he turned out to be a very good friend.

Crawford: How was he special as a bandleader?

Teagarden: He was not a disciplinarian, but he had a way of getting good musicians and getting them together. I don't know how good a businessman he was; I think he had a hard time, and I understand he committed suicide in Palm Springs.

The fellows always used to say that everything was great until he married one of the singers he had. I think her name was Doris Robbins or something, and I think they had a lot of trouble. I don't know too much about that.

Crawford: Was he a young man?

Teagarden: Yes, I'm guessing he was about fifty-four, fifty-five when he died.

Crawford: He must have been extraordinary to attract all those musicians that he did, including yourself.

Teagarden: Yes, he did. He had a knack of getting good people. He had a wonderful group, and a lot of that group turned into that World's Greatest Jazz Band. In fact, Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart are going to have a big thing in L.A. in September. It'll be Yank's eightieth birthday and they're celebrating.

Anyway, Eddie Miller and so many of those people have died lately, just the last few years.

Crawford: Bud Freeman was in that group?

Teagarden: I'm not sure he was in that Pollack group, but he was in this clique in New York where everybody recorded and played together. Jack made a lot of records with him. Bud Freeman,

Jimmy McPartland, and Stan Getz. Matty Matlock was a wonderful arranger and musician, and when I got a job in Hollywood, on the nights off, everybody'd come down to play, and it turned out I had more people--Red Nichols was playing there and I had a bigger band than he did! [laughter] And nobody was being paid but me. We had wonderful times down there, and I thought so much of Matty.

And Hoagy Carmichael was great; he followed us around a lot. He was a pallbearer at Jack's funeral, and I remember one time he caught something I did in a show that was in a theater. He was in the audience or something--and he came backstage and gave me a big hug and a note saying I had knocked him out with "Hobson Street." He's corresponded with me several times and not too long before he died he sent me that picture that you saw.

He was from Indiana, and he and Johnny Mercer had a sort of--it wasn't a southern drawl but a midwestern something, and no pretence about them. Just very, very talented people and real down to earth.

And Bing Crosby, I met, but I really didn't know him. He did a real nice thing for Jack. One time Jack got his union card taken away because his manager hadn't paid the payroll taxes, and it was some manager he'd had that skipped out, so the union took his union card away from him and he couldn't work.

Bing Crosby heard about it and he sent for Jack and paid off that payroll tax for him and got his card back. Jack hadn't asked him for it or anything.

Crawford: Was there a lot of that sort of thing among musicians?

Teagarden: Yes, especially somebody who didn't watch the business part of it more than Jack did. He just wasn't conscious of how to run things as far as the money that came in and went out. It was just beyond him. All he thought about was the music.

Music and Management

Teagarden: I know when he got a new manager, and the only time he got one was between wives, you know. The manager would come to me and say, "Can you get Jack in here to go over the books with me so I can show him what's going on and how things are?"

So I'd go to Jack and he'd say, "That's what I hired him for! He's supposed to do that. I just take care of the music. Let him do that." I just could never get him to do anything.

Crawford: Did you do your own managing?

Teagarden: I sure did. I never had an agent, but if you are going to make your living from music, you have to have one. Weslia Whitfield and her husband asked me about an agent, and I wrote Marian McPartland and Gerry Mulligan and they're going to get in touch with them. Real nice.

But I was so conservative. I did a lot of stupid things, really. When I went to buy something, things that I really wanted, I'd be afraid to go and get that much, so I would settle for something less, and it always turned out that I could have done it.

One time I wanted to buy a new piano, and the dealer had a Steinway in his home that he liked real well, and he knew me and he liked me and he made me a good price on it, but it was about \$600 more than the one that was in his showroom, which was a Kurzman. And I liked that all right, but it wasn't a Steinway, and I was just afraid I couldn't make it, so I took the Kurzman. And then I had it all paid off, and all I needed to do was go a little longer and get the best.

Crawford: Now you have a Baldwin.

Teagarden: Yes, John told me to pick out whatever I wanted, and so I did. I was still conservative when I picked it out, but I got a good piano and got the one I wanted.

Crawford: Well, you say that Jack got management between wives, was that because his wives were his managers?

Teagarden: Yes, especially Addie, the last one. She was managing the band and if they got mad or had any trouble, she'd just pick up the payroll and go! [laughter] So you'd have to hire a manager, and in two or three months they'd make up and she'd come back and they'd start all over again.

Jack Teagarden and Louis' All Stars: 1947-1951

Crawford: We talked some about Jack and Louis Armstrong. Was Jack's association with Louis' band beneficial to his career?

Teagarden: Oh, Louis and Jack were awfully close, but I never thought that association was very good for Jack, because Jack was shy and Louis wasn't, you know, and Jack was such a superb musician. But when Louis walked out, it's all Louis' show, you know, and whoever's with him is in the background, and I didn't think it was good for Jack to do that. But they loved each other.

Crawford: Was that why he eventually left the All Stars and formed his own group in 1952?

Teagarden: Yes, that was one of the reasons. Jack was in debt too from his big band and he owed a lot to his musicians. Louis was booked solid and paid well. He and Louis were close, but you don't think alike, as I said. The cultures are different. It's not that they didn't like each other, but they have certain ways you don't have.

Music brings people together--like Fats Waller was so exuberant, but if one musician is married and trying to put kids through school [and the other isn't] they wouldn't have much in common. The married one wouldn't want to play all night. Anyway, Jack was a superb musician, but shy. So it was better for him to have his own group.

Another reason he left to form his own band was that they traveled so much and did so many one-nighters and things that you just can't stand it. It's a terrible life.

One time Pops Foster, a bass player that used to know Louis real well, Louis was griping because he couldn't keep his men with him, and Pops Foster said, "Well you can't blame them.

They want to be home with their families sometimes. They can't just stay on the road like that all the time."

And Louis said, "If you can't book me in New York, book me in Guadalajara." [laughter] Wanted to keep working all the time. I could tell you some funny things but you'd have to turn that thing off!

Crawford: I think they first recorded together in 1929, and the recording was "Knockin' a Jug."

Teagarden: I think so. But the best thing Jack did at the start of his career--probably the second record--was "She's a Great, Great Girl." That's what started him in New York, because he played differently than they were used to hearing. He just had all the offers he wanted right at the start. Jack never had a hard time in music getting jobs.

Crawford: He had an enormous number of recordings, didn't he, and played with so many others.

Teagarden: Oh, yes.

Crawford: What do you know about his touring with the All Stars?

Touring with the All Stars: More about Race Relations

Teagarden: In some ways it was a very unique experience, because not many people get that sort of experience to be the only white person in their world. It used to make Jack furious, that they'd leave New York on the train and everybody had a great time--they were all in the same car, and they'd get to a certain point and the conductor would come and tell Jack he'd have to leave or the others would have to.

I talked about how the hotels wouldn't accept blacks, and he'd call up friends and tell them to take them in for the night a lot of times, and Jack was real bitter about the way they were treated. And I don't blame him.

Crawford: Did you see things get better?

Teagarden: Yes, people can go anywhere in the South now; stay at any hotel. We used to have drinking fountains, colored and white. And I saw that and I didn't realize when I was little. You got on a bus and the back was colored only. And when you're eight years old, it's just the way things were.

In my grandmother's restaurants all the help, the dishwashers and everybody, was colored, and we just had a great time together. There wasn't any difference in the way anybody was treated, but they had to eat in the back dining room, and they went in the back door. We just didn't think--that's the way things were.

Crawford: I read that Supreme Court Justice Marshall claimed he couldn't get a taxi in Washington and had never been invited to be a member of a private club.

Teagarden: There was an article not long ago. A movie star had a nice looking car, and he was constantly stopped by policemen who couldn't figure out how he could have a car like that if he wasn't on drugs or selling drugs.

And then I told you the story that Sammy Davis, Jr. told, that Lena Horne's daughter went swimming at a hotel in Las Vegas and they drained the pool. That was in the fifties.

Crawford: What a contrast with the story you told about the King of Sweden.

Teagarden: Yes, thirty thousand people at the airport with the King of Sweden to meet Louis Armstrong and his band. And then what happened in Los Vegas. So things have certainly changed now.

There's Allen Smith, a good trumpet player, married to a girl he met in college--he's black and I think she's white--and they've got three tall, good-looking, athletic boys, and they have a lovely home here and I've often wondered how it must have been. She must have had a lot of tough times.

Crawford: Yes. Well, how about Harlem in the heyday?

Teagarden: I didn't get in on that Harlem scene. Oklahoma City had some things like that. Charles Christian, a very famous guitar player, played with Benny Goodman, he lived in Oklahoma City

and there were a lot of good musicians there. And I told you about Deep Two.

And then Mary Lou Williams and I used to see each other quite a lot, as I mentioned, but my landlady raised a lot of objections, because she came to the house. And Pha Terrell was a singer with Andy Kirk's band and he used to come with Mary Lou, and he was a good dancer and my sister-in-law used to live with me before they were married and she was picking up dance steps from him and Mary Lou and I were working on the piano.

Crawford: Yes. I wanted to ask you about Pee Wee Russell. He was always controversial.

Teagarden: Yes, I didn't know him at a good time, because he was feeling pretty sick. Jack and Louis went to see him when he was out here, and I've got a picture of Jack leaning over his bed in the hospital.

Jack and Pee Wee had known each other since they were boys in Texas, and I think Pee Wee had a lot to do with Jack getting to New York.

Crawford: On that Monterey Jazz Festival recording Jack said, "Pee Wee wrote the book."

Teagarden: Yes, he said that about a lot of them. He'd get to talking, "the best piano player in the world. The best drummer in the world." Everybody was the greatest you'd ever seen. [laughter] He'd mean it when it said it. You couldn't take him too literally because he praised everybody. It was just his way. He was a very sweet person.

Crawford: His years with Louis Armstrong. Were they successful?

Teagarden: Money-wise. By that time he'd given up the big band, and he went to Nice, France as the winner of the Downbeat poll. Earl Hines won it, Jack won it, and Barney Bigard on clarinet, anyway, that's how he went to the East Coast--they all won in their category.

The Big Bands

Crawford: What did you think about the big bands? They are criticized as depriving jazz of its soul, of being reactionary, etc.

Teagarden: I hated to see them end. Those big bands were so wonderful. We looked forward to them and bought the records and led the music and the arrangements and everything, but you see it just got too expensive and couldn't carry that many people. And living expenses got so high on the road and the salaries, and even then they didn't make much. So it sort of died out in the forties.

Crawford: Jack formed his first band in 1939?

Teagarden: Yes, '39.

Crawford: Was he happy playing with Paul Whiteman those five years? I read in that paper about Charles that Jack left Whiteman the minute his contract expired. Even Charles didn't know he planned to have his own band then.

Teagarden: Yes, I think he was; more so than he let himself believe. A lot of people kept telling him he was wasting his talent; he should be in front of a band, and that was about the time Tommy Dorsey and everybody was getting bands. But my brother Charles said, "Someday he's going to wake up and admit that was five of the most constructive years he ever spent." Because they had wonderful music, and they had good radio programs, they had good salaries, all their travel was first class, and there was a lot of prestige to that.

And excellent music--not as a soloist--although he got to play a lot in the Whiteman band, but as part of an ensemble that had harps and violins. It was just a privilege to get to work like that.

Crawford: I read he made some comment about "You couldn't cut a frog." That was from Peck Kelley, I think. He felt that Whiteman was so strict--that you didn't change things--that if you played Ravel's Bolero, for example, you played it as it was written.

Teagarden: Whiteman had Jack and Bix Beiderbecke and a lot of good jazz musicians with him, and later he would put them in small

groups. I mentioned that Johnny Mercer wrote several tunes for Jack.

Crawford: "Fare Thee Well to Harlem." Did they really sing that at the Met?

Teagarden: At Carnegie Hall. I wasn't there then. But it was a cute little bop song, and he did that under Whiteman's name, and "I'm Coming, Virginia," and some of those were terrific band things. He'd let them play--he'd get the small groups. But mostly they'd do a number or two in the small groups and then go back to the ensemble.

Crawford: On the same program?

Teagarden: Yes.

Crawford: Did "Basin Street Blues" come from that period?

Teagarden: No, I think that was from a recording date that Glenn Miller and Jack got together, because "Basin Street" wasn't long enough. So they wrote that verse--"Won't you come along with me?" He and Glenn Miller wrote that, and it's been that way ever since. [sings] In "Fare Thee Well," he said something about his horn "kinking out." He said it mainly for his black friends.

Crawford: I read that when Whiteman lost his popularity Chesterfield was sponsoring him and they dropped his radio show and hired Glenn Miller to take over.

Teagarden: Yes.

The Jack Teagarden Band

Crawford: You told me that Jack wanted Stan Getz to play with the band, and he literally had to adopt him.

Teagarden: No, he assumed legal guardianship because he was only fifteen, and he lived with Jack. That was in the forties.

Crawford: Jack is supposed to have said that he had two players in the band that money couldn't buy: Jimmy McPartland and Charles Teagarden.

##

Crawford: Well, you told me that Jack hired Cub, but that it didn't work out?

Teagarden: No, and it was a shame. A drummer is a very hard thing. It's hard to put an inexperienced drummer in a band where most of the people were stars, and a lot of them had come from Whiteman. Cub hadn't had quite enough experience to be there. Jack wanted him there badly and he wanted to be there badly, but it takes years to develop something like that, and it was too big a jump for Cub to have made at that time.

Crawford: Were there any hard feelings?

Teagarden: I think Cub was hurt, but I think that he realized in the long run it was best. But it did sour him on the music business, although he stayed in it a little while longer after he got out of the Army. But Cub was brilliant and he worked hard, and he had a lot of talent, and whatever he did he just put everything in it. But he made his mark. And he told me later that if he'd been in the music business he would have drunk, that the temptations were too much for him.

Crawford: You said before that there was a lot of drinking.

Teagarden: Most of them did. I knew one or two who didn't. I don't know, it just seems that you're around it all the time, and everybody wanted to buy you a drink. I never went into it too much, and nobody ever insisted. For another thing, I never felt I could play if I was drinking.

Most of the bands I knew, their hours were so irregular that they couldn't sleep, so they'd take a drink, maybe, and try to go to sleep, or they'd take bennies and wake up, you know, to get on the job. I was around that kind of thing much more than dope--I didn't really know anything about cocaine or any of those things. If there was any of that going on, I didn't know about it, but I don't really believe that was in at the time. I think it was alcohol.

Crawford: The drinking and the hours made marriage pretty rough, didn't it?

Teagarden: Yes, it did. It was hard being married to a musician. If you were with your husband on the road all the time it cost enough that neither one of you made any money. And if you stayed home and had children and had to divide the paycheck, you didn't come out ahead there either. And then you were lonely--it was a hard life.

LaNora put her foot down with Charles, and Jack would be on the wagon as long as twelve years. He was never staggeringly drunk and he could always play.

Crawford: Are there more drugs out there now?

Teagarden: Oh, yes. In those days it was mainly alcohol. Jack didn't fool around with marijuana but some did, and I guess now it is pretty prevalent.

Playing with Women's Bands

Crawford: Tell me about performing with women's bands.

Teagarden: I just worked one summer with Ada Leonard at the Hilton Hotel-- I think it's the Wilton now, but I think she had about twelve girls, and it was a lot of fun. I had never worked with a girls band before, and the drummer, you know, she had to take her shoes off after she got on the stand so she could use the pedals, and the trumpet player and the horn player, they'd take the lipstick off. Just things I hadn't thought of.

And trying to get uniforms was very funny. One girl would say, "I can't wear that color" and another would say, "I couldn't possibly wear that," and another would say, "I can't wear a gathered skirt!" [laughter] They could always settle on the color blue, though.

Crawford: I was going to ask you that; for some reason in my mind it was blue.

Teagarden: That's right. They'd always end up with a couple of blue things because the blondes and the redheads and the dark ones could all wear it.

Ada Leonard had a professional arranger and he would rehearse the band, and they had the cutest little show and did little dance steps and things like that. And they had some singing numbers, and it was just a little hotel band that would put on these cute little shows every set or two. And she was a gorgeous girl, this Ada Leonard, and she was in front. She wasn't an instrumentalist, just a bandleader.

Crawford: How about Ina Ray Hutton?

Teagarden: I worked just a couple of jobs with her. Some of these people, though, that were in the Ada Leonard Band were in the other bands too, and they sort of went from one band to another.

Crawford: Was it fun to play in an all-girls band?

Teagarden: I enjoyed it. These girls were all real nice girls. Most of them had studied music in college, you know, trying to make a living out of it, and it wasn't easy being a horn player and making a living at it. Unless it's your group, then it's different, but to be a side person in one of those bands, I think it's hard.

I have a friend here now, Lisa Pollard, who is a saxophone player, and I think she's doing very well, but she sure had a struggle. I think she's proved that she's competent, capable and responsible, does what she's supposed to. And so far as women being in the music business is concerned, most of them marry and they have children and they forget it. It just doesn't work together.

V THE FIFTIES AND ONWARD

Touring with the Teagarden Band in the Fifties

Crawford: You were back with Jack's band in the fifties. How was that different than the earlier band?

Teagarden: Well, I joined Jack's band in 1952, and there were only six or seven people, so we didn't have to work so hard because we didn't move that fast. We stayed two weeks every place at a minimum, and six weeks usually. We stayed six weeks in New York--we played at Basin Street--and that's where I met Gerry Mulligan and Johnny Hodges and Lionel Hampton, and when you play in New York they don't get through until five or six in the morning.

They had three bands when we were there. They had Johnny Hodges, and he had Lawrence Brown with him, and then Gerry Mulligan's band and our band and they alternated, so you'd have quite a bit of time off, you know, in between, but you were still tied down and couldn't leave. And Gerry Mulligan used to play his sets and our sets too. He was a real sweetie.

Crawford: Oh, he'd sit in?

Teagarden: Yes, he was a real sweetie. He sent me a CD for my birthday. Real nice.

Crawford: Did you always play New York in the autumn?

Teagarden: Well, it always seemed to be fall. We always played The Frolics in Columbus, Ohio, and we played Colonial Taverns in Toronto and Basin Street in New York, and in Boston. I can't remember the name of the place we played in Boston, but we had a little circuit of about six places--six or eight towns--and you'd just go from one to the other, and Muggsy Spanier usually followed us or the Four Freshmen followed us a lot.

And then one time we were on the schedule with Turk Murphy, so it was kind of a clubby little thing. I know when I got to Boston we were told that the apartments that the bands had been renting were near there, and somebody from Turk Murphy's band that I knew real well said, "Be sure and rent the apartment we had."

So I asked for their apartment, a little two-room affair, and they had "Welcome Norma" and in the refrigerator were eggs and bacon and a cake and oh, just all kinds of things. It was cute. And Bob Short, the bass player, was a flyer, and later on he was flying a test plane and crashed.

On the Road at Christmastime

Teagarden: But I was on the road so much during that time, between '52 and '55, and we weren't home quite a few Christmases at that time.

Crawford: You sure were--what a schedule! I'll put the itinerary you showed me into the appendix to give an idea of just how busy you were during those years.

Teagarden: We were home Thanksgivings most times, and we were in New York one Christmas.

We stayed at the Skyler Hotel and I don't remember where it was, but my room had a fireplace in it and Jack's little boy Joe was about four and I told him Santa Claus always came down the chimney and that we were going to move the chair back to give Santa Claus plenty of time to get down the chimney. I was just having some fun with Joe.

He was a cute little kid, and I remember that a ballroom burned down where we were supposed to play and we were on

layoff for about a month. They stayed on to make some more records--I'd made four sides and they had four more to do, so the band stayed and I just took a plane on home because they were going to sit around there all that time. It was tough financially too.

Anyway I had Joe there and we'd take him out and he'd say, "See the lights! See the lights!"--he made you see things you hadn't seen before. He used to come knock on my door, and he couldn't read, so I'd ask him how he knew where I lived, and he pointed to the light fixtures and said he counted them.

I'd take him into a toy store and he'd pick out some big fancy thing and I'd say, "Oh, Joe, that's so tacky, but look at this cute little thing. You can put it in your pocket and carry it with you," and he'd get so excited. They had the little prizes in the cereal boxes and I had those all lined up here--I know we were there six weeks and I ate a box every day to get the prize and he'd come down and knock on my door.

Crawford: He was at your birthday party, wasn't he?

Teagarden: Yes, he was. He sure was a cute little thing. In Canada, I felt kind of sorry for his half-sister. She's about eighteen, and they carried her along and then made her the babysitter all the time. She was an attractive girl and every time somebody would see her with Joe they'd think he was hers.

Crawford: That's hard. Who is her mother?

Teagarden: Addie, the fourth wife. They are in Ft. Lauderdale now, and Addie lives with her daughter in Florida.

Meeting John Friedlander

Crawford: Well, when you got married in 1955, was that the end of your touring?

Teagarden: Yes, it really was, because I got off the road then. And the first year I married, John was very interested in politics, and I met Senator Proxmire, and he was running for the Senate, and

so I was playing for some of those political groups and we met a lot of interesting people that were supporting him.

Then we came out here and I played a few jobs--but not very much. I had some pupils when we lived over on Pacific between Lyon and Presidio. It was a converted mansion, converted into apartments, so all around it were beautiful homes, the Comstock, so I had the cream of the crop as far as the people were concerned.

Crawford: I like the story about your meeting John. Would you talk about that?

Teagarden: We were playing in Milwaukee--it was the second time we were there--and John came in every night with some girl, and Jack and John used to sit together a lot and visit, and Jack was on the wagon and John didn't drink, so they'd sit there with their cokes. This girl went on vacation, and the last night we were there he came in alone. He wanted to take me to dinner the next day, and I said, "I can't, we're leaving tomorrow."

So the next day he came over for breakfast and I had this bad stye on my eye, and Jack said, "We're not going anywhere until you go to the doctor and do something about your eye." So John took me to a doctor he knew there, and when I got back we left.

We were going up to Wisconsin [Dells], but we had some dates to play first--like Sheboygan and all those smaller places. Anyway we were going to be up in Wisconsin Dells over Labor Day holiday and John wanted to come up.

I could tell he was interested in me, and I didn't want him to be, because my mother lived with me and I had my own home out here and I was going with a fellow that I'd gone with for about five years, and I just wasn't in a position to get tied up with anybody. I didn't want to, and I told him that if he wanted to come up and see the band that was all right, but not to come up just to see me.

So he came anyway, and he'd take us off to work in the car, so we were glad he was there. We didn't have to take cabs. We were playing in Warsaw, Indiana, some place, at the Elks Club, and he called and he wanted me to come to Chicago to meet his mother, and I said, "I can't, we're leaving

for California tomorrow." We were coming out here to play at the Hangover for six weeks.

He said, "If I pay the fare, will you come?" I said, "Yes, I'd come."

Crawford: You must have known something was going on by then!

Teagarden: Yes. Well, I got back on the stand and I said, "You know that guy that came up to see us? He wants me to come up and meet his mother." Everybody in the band said, "Oh, I want to meet his mother!" [laughter] We all hated those long trips.

Crawford: You were driving?

Teagarden: Yes, and I wasn't going to have to drive. They had about three cars, which really made it better, because we stayed longer and you could carry things with you. I could carry my typewriter; I could carry my little eleven-pound sewing machine, and if I wanted to I could sew a little or something.

Crawford: Car trips are long, but flying, you don't feel like you're really going anywhere.

Teagarden: No, and your luggage is so limited. We went on trains more than planes with the big band in the 1940s. Then the planes we went on weren't commercial planes, they were Army planes. Those C-47s didn't have seats, so we'd sit on the luggage.

The Hollywood Canteen

Teagarden: Did I tell you about the Hollywood Canteen--sending us to Washington in 1952? They gave TVs to all the military hospitals, and then they put us on a plane that landed in the water--you know, those seaplanes--and then they'd take those skis they use off, and put on wheels, and then they'd put up a ramp onto land?

Crawford: Oh, no--where was that?

Teagarden: That was in Key West. And then the piano there had been in a hurricane, and it was just awful. This wasn't Jack's group.

Jack was in it and Charles and I, and it was musicians from Hollywood, and this was in the fifties. See, they had this money left over from the war, and we played in all the hospitals, and the plane they sent after us was one of these very luxurious planes, and it looked like Air Force Two maybe, not One but Two, and the fixtures looked like sterling. You know, the handles and everything. Gorgeous plane, to take us to Washington.

Crawford: Did you like to fly?

Teagarden: Oh yes, and I loved that whole outfit, because they had dancers and singers. And wonderful musicians on there, and it was just great.

A Marriage Proposal

Crawford: Well, you met John's mother--

Teagarden: Yes, and he asked me to marry him that same day, and I don't know, it seemed like it was steady and the sort of security that you never have in the music business. And their home was one of the oldest in Glencoe; they were settled, and it was the kind of life I'd never had. I'd always thought I wanted something like that.

Of course he was tired of that kind of life and he wanted to tour! [laughter] But all of us would buy houses and never get to stay in them very much. We never got much time at home, but it gave us some roots, and we needed some roots.

So a lot of the things John had that I thought I wanted, he was tired of by that time. And it's taken us years, but now it's all meshed together.

Crawford: That's good. Well, what made you move to Northern California then?

Teagarden: John and his partner had the lease on all those cards for the buses and trolleys and things--you know those car cards you see inside and outside--that was their business. Their lease was up and the city wanted to take it over and put them on salary,

and neither one of them wanted to work that way. It was their business and they wanted to keep it that way.

So John's partner had always wanted to come to California and John said he'd like to come too. I wanted to go back to Long Beach where I still had my house, and I was so well established in Hollywood and Long Beach too with music positions, and I belonged to the union in both places and I knew a lot of people because I had been single so much of the time and gotten around a lot, but he didn't want to go down there. He wanted to go to San Francisco, and I didn't care--at least I was closer to home than I'd been before.

Crawford: And your mother was still down there?

Teagarden: Yes--she was down there. And after we married in 1955, I fixed another [unit] in my house--we lived in an R-2 district. I remodeled and she had an apartment there. I had so much trouble with it eventually, and Mama had a sister there in Long Beach who lived alone, and Mama went to live with her. I sold the house in 1963 and Mama went to live with her sister.

Crawford: Did you retire for a while after you got married? I remember reading somewhere that Jack went on tour and really wanted you to come but you decided not to go. That was the Asia tour in 1958, I think.

The Teagarden Band Tour of Asia: 1958-1959

Teagarden: I would have liked to go on that tour, but I just couldn't do that to John. They had talked about it when I was in the band. It was sort of in the air, but nothing ever happened. It was one of those things that'd be talked about as almost a sure thing, and then dropped, and for months nobody heard anything about it.

Crawford: Was that a State Department tour?

Teagarden: Yes. But the same group that I was with all went, and I'm sure it was an experience that they were glad they had. That they got to go when everything was lovely and beautiful, and saw the culture with no war and the way they lived before everything

was spoiled and before there were any hard feelings and when everyone was entranced with American music and vice versa.

Jack brought back reels and reels of Indian music, which doesn't mean anything unless your ear is trained for that kind of thing.

Crawford: Did he like Indian music?

Teagarden: He did, he got a kick out of it.

Crawford: In the book you gave me, it said he became a little disenchanted with America. Is that true?

Teagarden: I'm not sure--I haven't read the book in so long--but it might have been the music, because everything got to be rock and roll, and the big bands couldn't work. They just all kind of died out, and the ones that didn't had a terrible time financially.

Woody Herman worked so hard all his life, and the IRS took a home that he'd had for years and years.

But I think it was mostly music that bothered him, because I don't think he was politically minded very much until he did come back, and he had an entirely different view of how Americans were over there at that time. But I have a hunch he was talking about music. Somewhere in there is a magazine article about "the startling change in Jack Teagarden after he came back after twenty-six weeks in Asia." I've forgotten what it's about, but I know I've still got it.

I knew he was getting disgusted about music though, because you could take two chords, you know, the Chubby Checkers stuff, and I don't know--music just changed overnight.

Crawford: But there was a great jazz craze in Europe about that time, wasn't there?

Teagarden: Yes. It's still easier, still alive, and everybody who goes to Europe seems to have a much better reception.

A New Life in Northern California

Crawford: It's sad, isn't it, because it is such an American idiom. Well, what did you do during that period? Were you mostly teaching then?

Teagarden: Yes, that's what I was doing, and I worked maybe two-three jobs a year, like July 4 or maybe New Year's. I always worked New Year's and things like that. But I had nice things happen. Women's Day magazine--I worked a job for them at the Fairmont one time, and they liked my playing because they had a lot of people in the General Foods Industries, and they liked to have jam sessions and parties and things, and they wanted somebody who knew tunes from that era.

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Crawford: Did you play for them elsewhere?

Teagarden: Yes. I went to Vancouver, and then the next five or six years, I went to Dallas once a year for them, and then the man who hired me for that retired, and they didn't give those parties anymore. See, they gave a party for the General Foods Industries once a year because they wanted them to put their magazines up at the front there--Family Circle and Woman's Day--and they gave these lavish parties and I had a wonderful time. They were always very nice to me.

And then I went one year to Dallas with the Jazz Educators. They were giving Jack a plaque and they gave it to me, but they were honoring him, and that was in Dallas too. Bobby McFerrin was on that job, and I sat in with the Dixieland bands they had there. I get a kick out of Bobby McFerrin when he sings.

They had college bands, and some of them were just marvelous--their arrangements and things--I was just entranced, because they were intricate and sophisticated and everything. The only thing is they were all so interested in ensembles that they really didn't make good soloists. They all worked together so beautifully, and it was just great.

Sooner or later, they'll want to play with a smaller combination so they can get a chance to play solo. You know,

even down at Washington Square, if three or four are in there, they always kind of wish that there weren't that many!
[laughter] They'd rather play more.

Crawford: I have to make a confession. I'd rather hear you play alone.

Teagarden: That's very flattering.

Crawford: Well, then you started working more. Did you cut back on the teaching then?

Teagarden: No, I never taught a whole lot, anyway, but I did have fourteen or fifteen pupils there for a while.

Crawford: That's a big load.

A Mexican Cruise

Teagarden: Well, it was enough that I didn't do much at night. I had a chance to go to Mexico with a band on a cruise, and I'd never been on a cruise ship, and I could have taken John, but he didn't want to go. All the other fellows took their wives, and John didn't want to go because he thought I'd be working from the time I got up to the time I went to bed and he'd just be stuck.

But it wasn't that way at all. There was a ten-piece band that John Cordoni had, and we played the tea dance things from five to about seven or eight o'clock, and we played one other time--maybe nine to eleven or something--anyway, it wasn't bad.

Then they had a four-piece group from Hollywood, a real good group, you know, it had Babe Russin in it. Then they had a rock and roll group that started after one o'clock, up on the top deck, so I didn't have to work hard at all, and it was just great fun. We didn't get any money for it; we just got our fare.

Crawford: That's okay!

Teagarden: I thought it was great.

Norma Teagarden illustrative material, in order of appearance.

1. Jack, Charles, and Norma Teagarden, 1914.
2. Top: on the road with the Jack Teagarden Band in the 1940s.
Bottom: Jack, Norma, and Charles (foreground); Dale Jones (bass); Clint Garvin (clarinet), Oklahoma City, 1943.
3. Jack, Helen, Norma, and Charles--the last appearance together at the Monterey Jazz Festival, 1963. Photograph by Jim Marshall.
4. Norma in the 1970s. Photograph by Romaine Photography.
5. Norma and "Mama T" play four-hand at a picnic in Berkeley, 1973.
6. Norma and Earl "Fatha" Hines at the Washington Square Bar and Grill, San Francisco, 1982.
7. John Friedlander, Norma's husband, with the Empress of the Sacramento Traditional Jazz Society Festival, 1983. Photograph by Ed Lawless.
8. Norma Teagarden, pen and ink drawing by Judith Clancy Johns, 1988.

All photographs courtesy of Norma Teagarden and John Friedlander.







Jim Marshall (M)

The Seagardens - 1963 -











VI PLAYING THE FESTIVALS

A 1976 Tour in Europe and Becoming Empress in Sacramento

Teagarden: Then I started getting calls to go to festivals and things, and I went to Breda, Holland for a festival--that was in 1976. And it was that New Orleans Jazz Society. The people in Holland wanted a Lu Watters-type band--he was real big out here, and I wasn't familiar with him because he wasn't in business when I got here.

It's not really my type of band, this particular group, and not a group that I really feel at home with, but I like all the people very much. They're all terrific. It's just that you have to stay with a pretty structured thing. They had a library, you know, and they didn't allow for improvising much. I like a swing band, and this was one of those tuba-banjoes type and it was a good band for what they wanted.

So anyway we went over to London, and there was a man there named Max Colley, and he was awfully nice to us. He had us over to the club, and we worked out there with him for a couple of nights, and then his band would join us. It was fun; just a social sort of thing.

Then later I worked Indianapolis, and that was a great thing. Yank Lawson and Bobby Haggart were there and I knew them from a long time, and Kenny Davern--he was with our band in New York--and still works all the festivals, so it was kind of old home week.

Then ever since they made me queen in Sacramento--that was in 1983--I've gotten other invitations.

Crawford: Empress--better than queen, Norma!

Teagarden: Okay. [laughter] Anyway, that year I played with Allatria from Germany, the Benco Jazz Band from Budapest, the Bourbon Street Jazz Band from Denmark, the Climax Jazz Band from Toronto, the Dixieland All Stars from East Berlin. They made them leave their instruments at home so they wouldn't defect! Then there was the New Orleans Jazz Band from Hawaii, the Merseysippi Band from Liverpool, England, Noel Crane's Austrian Jazz Band from Sydney, and Pete Allen's Jazz Band from Berkshire, England.

I played nearly every time I've been over there, and I've gotten a lot of festivals out of that. In 1988 they invited alumni from Jack's band and I thought that was good. George Van Epps, Rex Allen, Barrett Deams, Ray Leatherwood, Gerry Fuller. Governor Deukmajian was there and his wife took me to lunch.

Crawford: Oh, is that the way it happens? People hear you and invite you to their festival.

Teagarden: Yes, I've just gotten an invitation to Pismo Beach on October 25, 26, and 27. I asked them how they got my phone number and they said they got it from Dr. Lawless. So I called him and said, "Did you get me that job down there?" and he said, "No, they saw you play in Sacramento." So I think that's the way it is.

And I worked the first one we had in Redding--I don't know how long ago that was; it hasn't been too long ago, maybe four or five years. That's going real well. In some of those places it's been overdone. You know, there's one here once a month and then one in the East Bay and one in Monterey. Monterey's is going down, I think. They've gotten to where they don't have a good monthly attendance. They've got to have a certain number of musicians to go and play, or else it won't go.

They have a nice Dixieland festival down there in March, and I play that. I've played Concord and Shoreline.

Crawford: When was it that you were playing with Earl Hines at the Hangover?

Teagarden: I played intermissions with him there--I was married so it must have been in the seventies. I wish I could find my books.

Washington Square Bar & Grill: 1975

Crawford: Then you started at the Washington Square Bar & Grill in 1975.

Teagarden: Yes, that's been sixteen years.

Crawford: Is that a good place for you to play?

Teagarden: In some ways it is, but as far as playing is concerned, it's hard to play, and it's terribly noisy. But it's always crowded, and I have a lot of friends there. There's a lot of people who come in every Wednesday. If Marilyn and Bob Unsworth don't show up, I can send the police after them or I can send John--and there are other people who come in.

And then there are other people who'll come in and ask you to play for a birthday party or you get another job out of it.

Crawford: Is it financially worthwhile for you to do it?

Teagarden: Oh, I think so. It's an off night, and if you want to work on weekends, you can always pick up a job, and it helps you to keep in practice, I mean if it weren't for that I would probably go weeks without practicing the piano, and so I get at least that much in.

I read in the newspaper--maybe it was in Herb Caen's thing--that a landlord once asked Stan Getz if he practiced at night, and Stan Getz said he didn't practice at all, that if he couldn't play by now! [laughter]

Crawford: I don't believe that.

Teagarden: No, I don't either. If I don't play some during the week, my hands just give out in the four hours. Just get too tired. But anyway, I've been able to do some nice things in Austin and San Antonio, and Vernon, Texas, and Wichita Falls, and they all want me back this next year, so I'm looking forward to that.

I forgot all about Astoria, Oregon, and Ashland, I've been up there too.

The Teagardens at the Monterey Jazz Festival: 1963

Crawford: Let's talk about that Monterey Festival of 1963 that was so delightfully captured on tape, when practically the whole family, including Helen Teagarden, performed.

Teagarden: Mama and I were in the audience. We had driven down there and we didn't have any idea we were going to play. And Jack just called us up on the stage. And the review that Ralph Gleason wrote the next day--he said that it was "contrived sentimentality" or something like that. And it was so wrong--he wrote a beautiful obituary when Jack died, but this thing was awful.

Crawford: Leonard Feather wrote that it was one of his best personal recollections. It is such a touching performance in every way.

Teagarden: Thank you. Jack was so thrilled to have us all together. It'd been eight years since we'd seen each other and the three of us had been all together. And Mama to be there too.

That day he was very ill, and a lot of people didn't realize that. He went into the hospital the next day.

Crawford: What was it?

Teagarden: They had to tap his lungs to get water off. I don't know if it was the aftermath of pneumonia or what, but that's what killed him.

Crawford: He didn't live too much longer after that, did he?

Teagarden: No, he died in January, and that was the thirtieth of September. A lot of people thought he was too garrulous, but under the circumstances, knowing he was sick when he went in there, I just admired his courage.

Crawford: Writers always mention that he had a certain sadness in his music. Do you think of it as sad?

Teagarden: I don't know. I hadn't thought about that. I heard him play things so lovely, so beautifully that they just caught your heart. Maybe his music wouldn't be called light-hearted, but I think he had a wonderful life in so many ways--he always had a lot of adulation in his work, and everybody liked him. He was such a sweet guy and very unassuming and unpretentious and like an old shoe, you know.

He was so simple about things. Did I tell you about the time he got a new overcoat and came in a couple of days later without it? We asked him where it was, and he'd given it to somebody "because he was cold, and he didn't have one." We said, "Well, why didn't you give him your old one?" and he said, "He liked this one the best." [laughter] He just couldn't understand why you wouldn't give him the one he liked the best! And for that reason he had a lot of friends.

Crawford: He said something on the tape. He said, "Folks, I'm going to play you a cadenza. I think that's what they call it over at the symphony."

Teagarden: He was just teasing. He and Charles both had played with the [Philadelphia] Philharmonic a couple of times after they had left Whiteman. And the one thing he didn't have a lot of patience with was if you couldn't read. He said, "If you can't read, you just shouldn't be in the music business."

A couple of times we had people with us who were slow readers in the small band, and if they couldn't learn the chords, that was one thing he was impatient with. He wasn't ever harsh, you know, but he really felt that if you were going to be in the business, you had to be a reader. And I agree with him.

Crawford: Well, when you start off with a new arrangement, you pretty much read it from scratch, don't you? Do you usually have full notation?

Teagarden: Usually in the big band you've got chord symbols and notes, but there are some things now in music that are very difficult to read. Some of the new stuff. I've got some in here and I'll show you what I mean. I'm really not that good now because I don't read very much.

Crawford: Well, I often see one of your sidemen give you what looks like a scrap of paper. Do you have just a melody line and chord symbols--is that what you mean?

Teagarden: Yes, that's what you mostly use now. But some of that stuff that's written out is very difficult, and I don't know what it sounds like when it's through. Sometimes this modern music just sounds like what they're really doing is just running up and down scales and writing down something just to make a lot of noise. There isn't any melody to it at all.

Crawford: We're a long way from sweet melody and lyrics. My daughter is thirteen, though, and she loves music from the fifties.

Teagarden: Oh, bless her heart.

Dixieland in Monterey

[Interview 4: March 16, 1993] ##

Crawford: You have just been down at the Monterey Dixieland Jazz Festival, which was a wonderful weekend, and when Norma Teagarden walks into a room, everything comes to a halt, and the bandleader says, "Here is Miss Norma Teagarden!" What does that mean to you, Norma?

Teagarden: Well, I feel very flattered and touched. I don't think I deserve it, but I think a lot of it has to do with my age.

Crawford: Oh, no--I wouldn't say so. [To John Friedlander, Norma Teagarden's husband] John, did you want to say something? Come sit with us. I wanted to ask you what it means to Norma, when she goes to a festival like this and is paid tribute to every step of the way.

Friedlander: She knows damn well that she's worth it--very damn well.

Crawford: She's too modest.

Teagarden: You can't let him praise me too much--

- Crawford: Well, I heard you play a solo piece that I thought was so illustrative of your style. Would you play just a little bit of it, so that we can get an idea.
- Teagarden: I think this is what you're asking about--"It's All I Ask"--by Gordon Jenkins [plays].
- Crawford: That's beautiful. Is that entirely a set arrangement, or do you improvise in it?
- Teagarden: It's improvised--I mean, the melody is there.
- Crawford: So you've had written music to that?
- Teagarden: I had a lead sheet somewhere.
- Crawford: I see. Now, when you go to a Dixieland Festival like this one, it seems to be so informal. You walk into a room, and someone says, "Step up and play with us." Do you bring your own songs?
- Teagarden: No, there is a certain repertoire that Dixieland bands all know. There are standards for that, and so you don't have any trouble with those things.
- There's routines on things like "Panama," and "High Society" and "Rampart Street Parade" and "Bourbon Street Parade" and "Muskrat Ramble"--there's dozens of them and everybody knows them. "Royal Garden."
- Crawford: Always played in the same keys?
- Teagarden: Usually, unless you have someone singing, and usually you don't have on those kinds of things. They aren't really vocals.
- Crawford: So that virtually any skilled musician could sit in.
- Teagarden: If they'd been used to playing those things, why they would know the tunes. And of course there are standard things that everybody knows--just regular things like--"Blue Skies" and "Dinah." Everybody would know those. Most everybody knows "Just Friends," and it isn't hard to pick out things.
- Crawford: What does Dixieland mean to somebody who is coming to a festival today?

Defining Dixieland

- Teagarden: I think it means, it's usually a clarinet and a trombone and a trumpet on the front line, and drums and a bass and a piano in back, so it's usually six pieces. And sometimes it'd be seven with a guitar. It's not usually a big band, although the Bob Crosby Band was a big band that played Dixieland music. That's unusual, and it made that band stand out so much.
- Crawford: How faithful was he to the New Orleans form?
- Teagarden: Oh, well Bob Crosby was just a figurehead. He was just hired to front the band. He didn't know anything about the music particularly. A lot of the people were from New Orleans. Ray Bauduc, and I think Eddie Miller, and Nappy Lamare. They were from New Orleans, and I think as far as New Orleans music, you would call that music Dixieland Jazz--the Preservation Hall Jazz Band--they play Dixieland.
- Crawford: Differentiate Dixieland for me, would you, as opposed to straight jazz?
- Teagarden: Well, let's say Cole Porter and Harold Warren and those kinds of people were not Dixieland.
- Crawford: They were balladeers?
- Teagarden: I don't know what--more melodic things, and ballads--they wrote mostly. [break]
- Crawford: Well, I'm interested in knowing about the development of Dixieland. What have you seen happen?
- Teagarden: Well, I think Dixieland is going great right now. All these festivals are all Dixieland festivals. For example, in Sacramento there will be 110 bands and 16 of them are from foreign countries. And they're all Dixieland bands, and that's the largest international festival in the world.

Dixieland in Europe

Crawford: The Europeans love Dixieland?

Teagarden: Yes, and they all come, so you can sit in with them too.

Crawford: Where are the Dixieland festivals in Europe?

Teagarden: Breda, Holland, is one, and Edinburgh, Scotland, is another one, and there's quite a few clubs and things that have Dixieland bands in there. There's a lot of it in London, and it's very popular everywhere.

I think because it's happy music; it's not sad--and it has beginnings and endings and it bounces along, and you bounce along with it. Some of the Dixieland bands I've played with [are]--Wild Bill Davison and I've played with Muggsy Spanier, Pete Daily, and of course Mattie Matlock and that Crosby Band. And I've had some groups of my own that have been Dixieland bands.

And then, a lot of big bands--Whiteman and Crosby too--had Dixieland bands within the bands. They had another set of drums and a small upright piano they'd wheel out, and that's when they played their jazz, and they'd improvise as they went along. It was a change from the arranged things that you have to have in a big band. If you didn't you'd have pandemonium, everybody playing what they wanted to!

Crawford: When you went to Europe in 1976, where did you go and how was the reception?

Teagarden: Oh, it was fun and I enjoyed it a lot, but the band was a Lu Watters-type band, and that's not the kind of band I really feel most at home with.

Crawford: You mentioned that before. Why was that?

Teagarden: Lu Watters used to be a San Francisco outfit, and it was tubas, banjos, and they had two trumpets in the front line instead of one, so it was a little different, and it was mostly arranged with individual solos in between, and the musicians I went with were nice and we had a wonderful time but I would like to have

had a different kind of band. I would feel more at home with a swing type of band.

But I think they had a lot of different kinds of bands over there. I mean they were all Dixieland type, but different styles of Dixieland and that Lu Watters thing is real popular around here some now, and when I was on the road a lot of times people would ask me about Lu Watters and I'd never been here enough to know anything about him--I'd never even heard about him--but he had a club here and Turk Murphy was in his band and they sort of kept that kind of thing going.

Crawford: Turk Murphy had a more traditional sound, didn't he?

Teagarden: Well, Lu Watters did too. It was a lot like that and they kept that going. I just loved Turk, he was a wonderful guy, but he played kind of a tailgate trombone, and to me, Jack was so out of his class--Jack played so gorgeously--well, that wasn't Turk's type.

But I used to work a lot of intermissions for them. Sometimes for months at a time. And after a while you get sort of into it in spite of yourself, because it was happy, and it just keeps going, and first thing you know you're tapping your foot to it, and they never played any ballads or that kind of thing.

And then later on I figured out what Turk was trying to do. He was trying to keep that music alive around here, and he succeeded in it, and he succeeded in keeping six people working all the time. After he died it just sort of went to pieces. Nobody's had steady jobs since then.

Crawford: Did Jack ever play with Turk Murphy?

Teagarden: No.

Crawford: I remember your story about the territory bands and Jack.

Teagarden: You mean when I was out in New Mexico and Jack came through and he wanted to go with me to play that night, and I told him that the band wasn't any good at all, and he said well, he wasn't expecting anything, but he wanted to go anyway. He went and he picked up his horn and played about half a tune and then he just put it down. I said, "I told you the band wasn't any

good," and he said, "Well, you didn't tell me it was this bad!" [laughter]

He was with Whiteman at that time, and he was on the way back to the [East] Coast. I didn't realize quite how bad the band was until--you know, I'd get used to hearing things. We worked four or five nights a week, and I was still teaching in the daytime, so I was really making good money for the Depression.

Young People and Dixieland

Crawford: That's a good story. I was pleased to see in Monterey that there were young players in their twenties or thirties with each band.

Teagarden: Yes, I think you're right. I notice they're coming up. And Rex Allen is one of the younger trombone players that's real good, and I went to San Antonio and made a program for the river walk with Jim Cullough's band, and it was a PBS program, and Dan Barrett came from New York and he's young, and Bob Haven is sort of in the middle--I mean, he's certainly not old. And I've noticed they have these youth bands in Sacramento, and they have these scholarship programs, and there's been several of those youth bands that have done things. One of them went to work in Disneyland, and I'm glad to see it coming along.

Crawford: So you think it will be carried on, because it's so much more musical than what the kids are listening to.

Teagarden: I know, and I blame disk jockeys for that. That's what they are playing and that's what they're listening to, and that's what they're buying too.

Crawford: Is it different in Europe with the young people?

Teagarden: I don't know, but the crowds that we had in London and Liverpool and different places that we played were mixed--there would be young people. The thing that bothers me a little bit, is that you don't see very many blacks at those festivals. They don't care about that kind of music. It's kind of a rarity.

- Crawford: Well, has Dixieland been mostly a white players form?
- Teagarden: No, there were colored bands that played it.
- Crawford: Preservation Hall, of course.
- Teagarden: Yes, and there still is in New Orleans a lot of them, and there was a lot of black people from New Orleans like Louis and Pops Foster and they played Dixieland, but they also played some other things too.
- Crawford: Isn't it like the blues? The black kids today aren't going to want to hear the blues.
- Teagarden: Not in the same way. There's a trend either towards rock and roll, being real simple, or there's a real modern type of music, too, that's real dissonant, and I don't understand it, but some of the people have a marvelous technique. Keith Jarrett and Cecil Taylor.
- Crawford: Keith Jarrett does a lot of classical music too.
- Teagarden: Yes, and they're excellent musicians. I think that one of the best piano players, though, who can do most anything, would be Dick Hyman. I had a card from him the other day. He's on a cruise ship and he sent it from Hong Kong. [laughter]
- Crawford: Don Haas gave the master class that you and I went to?
- Teagarden: Yes. He's a wonderful musician and so versatile.
- Crawford: I read that Dick Hyman did some Gershwin in New York, and then he was supposed to go to Rome, but he went to the Caribbean instead and they called him and said, "Come to Rome--we're going to do the Gershwin again."
- Teagarden: Yes. And he sent me a tape not long ago of Cole Porter that he did.
- Crawford: I'd like to hear that!
- Teagarden: You sure can.

An 1986 Tour in London

Crawford: Well, in 1986, ten years later, you went back, and what band was that?

Teagarden: Three of the band were from England, and they live in this area, and they really wanted to go home, so it wasn't a booked thing, except that in London they did play at Club 100 on Oxford Street, and that's a well-known club, but mostly we played in places where the band shared the evening with friends of theirs, too.

Crawford: Was Brian one of them?

Teagarden: Yes, Brian was, and Don Bennett went, and also John Dodgshon from Sacramento--a trumpet player--and it was his group that went, and he and Brian, who has a home over there in a little village near Newcastle. It's Appleby, so we stayed there one night, and it was a cute little village, and I met some people there who were writers--Steve Voce--and we've kept up a correspondence.

Crawford: And you've been invited to go again in the fall, I understand?

Teagarden: Well, I've got an offer to. And I don't know for how long.

Crawford: Black blues musicians have told me they'd much rather play in Europe, because they think it's much more appreciated there.

Teagarden: I think they're right, and like Sydney Bechet and some people just moved to Paris because it was easier for them. Of course that was in the forties and earlier and the color line was not--there hasn't been one in Europe.

Australia is another place that really likes Dixieland. They're crazy about it.

Preparing for Festivals

Crawford: Well, I would like to ask you what you do to get your chops in shape? [laughter] Last Friday, what did you do to get ready to go to Monterey? Show me what you might do.

Teagarden: I don't think I did anything to get ready to go down there. I don't practice as much as I should. But when I do I try to practice scales and exercises, and I've got Hanon and I've got some Czerny and I've got two or three things. I've got a twenty or thirty-minute practice book.

Crawford: Play some Czerny. I haven't thought about Czerny for a long time.

Teagarden: Well, [playing] I'd have to get the book out.

Crawford: Are you conscious of preparing yourself?

Teagarden: Yes, if I know I'm going to be playing somewhere in, say, two weeks where I'm going to have to get things back under my hands, I try to get in at least an hour, an hour or a half, and I try to divide it and get in at least thirty minutes of exercises.

Crawford: What do you do for your left hand? The famous Teagarden left hand.

Teagarden: Well, not anything in particular. Scales and exercises. [plays] Those kinds of things. They use both hands. And I think that's just the era I grew up in--with more of the left hand.

Crawford: I wonder if you would illustrate that in a piece you like to play--say, "Stars Fell on Alabama." Something that would illustrate the use of the left hand in particular. [plays "My Funny Valentine"] Norma has such long, slender fingers and handles tenths as if they were fifths! [laughter]

Teagarden: I mentioned that I worked intermissions for Earl Hines. I took Joe's place--Joe Sullivan--when he was ill.

Crawford: I remember.

Teagarden: And Earl Hines had such big hands; he had about fifteen notes under both hands, and no matter what I played it was like I was playing a five-finger exercise. It really was a contrast, but he was a wonderful musician and a very great piano player.

You know, it's odd and sad. You can really never keep working in a place where you live, especially if you're a star and you get any kind of money at all. There's no place for you to stay; you have to get back on the road.

Crawford: I guess so.

Teagarden: He got to where he wasn't working very much, and he was too sick to go much too, the last year or so. And that's always sad, because you have to keep on the road to make money.

Crawford: You were talking about Hines' large hands and I'm reminded that once I had the privilege of hearing Vladimir Horowitz rehearse at the Opera House. He's very funny and he talked while he was playing. But I read somewhere that he was so intrigued with Art Tatum that he asked to meet him and look at his long fingers.

Teagarden: Yes--Art Tatum was another real genius; just so much technique. The runs and things and his sense of chords was so beautiful.

Mothers and Music

Crawford: We've talked about your mother teaching all of you from time to time, and I know that Earl Hines is somebody whose mother taught him, and Count Basie. Can you think of others who learned from piano-playing or organ-playing mothers?

Teagarden: Yes. You know, Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey--their mother was a musician. Charles and Jimmy used to playfully get in arguments about that--but Jimmy would always admit that my mother played more than his mother. They never had any trouble about that! [laughter]

Crawford: Did Helen Teagarden specialize in any one thing?

Teagarden: No, she liked the classics too.

Crawford: Would you play a bit of "Possum and Taters" in her honor?

Teagarden: [plays]

Crawford: That meter is just jumping on the tape recorder--feeling very happy about that.

While you're playing, would you illustrate some of the ornamentation, or carving? What do you feel especially easy with?

Teagarden: Well, I feel pretty easy with things that Bob Zurke used to write. [plays] That kind of thing. He had small hands, so he developed a kind of different style.

Crawford: Everybody has a distinct, personal style, it seems. Can you identify players just by their ornamentation?

Teagarden: Yes, I think so. Everybody thinks music differently. It's sort of like they had an exhibit where I go for exercise. They had an exhibit of preschool children--four and five years old--paintings. One child over there, and I'd like to meet her, used a lot of dark brown and dark colors.

Personal Illness and Helping Others

Crawford: Norma, you spend a lot of time helping others--visiting cancer patients and playing in hospitals. Could you talk about this and about the illness that you've experienced?

Teagarden: Yes, I had cancer of the thyroid in 1948, and then I had a mastectomy in 1979.

Crawford: How do you go about volunteering your time to help others who have had cancer?

Teagarden: Well, I'm a volunteer with Reach to Recovery and I call on people in the hospital and show them exercises and give information about reconstruction. They send me to the older people.

I go to a lot of their homes quite often too. Two, three times a month. I played at the Hyatt for the American Cancer Society recently too.

Crawford: How about Laguna Honda?

Teagarden: I play there once a week on Thursdays. Waldo Carter and I go. He just loves to go. I think practically all women are more empathetic with the old and sick. Maybe it's because they're used to it. They have children and parents that they look after. That's why Waldo is so unusual. After we play he just stays and stays and talks to everybody.

Crawford: What an inspiration for people you are--old and young!

Teagarden: I think I've had a heck of a time. I've really been very fortunate, because I got to stay in this business. I'm sorry in a way that I didn't have children, but if I'd had children, I'd never have gotten to do the things I've done. I can't think of anybody I'd trade my life with, and the deepest wish I ever had is just to keep playing better.

When I hear Dick Hyman and some of the people who are my idols as far as piano playing is concerned and I think I'd trade places with them just to be able to play that way.

I've been blessed with good health. I've had several serious things happen to me, but they didn't last too long and they haven't come back.

Crawford: You told me that when you were sick with thyroid cancer, you really learned about positive thinking.

Teagarden: I give that a lot of credit.

Crawford: Did you study it as a philosophy?

Teagarden: Oh, yes. I had a pupil who hadn't been doing well, and when I got there the mother had been in bed, and she said later on, "I took a look at you and decided I had to get up." And I took a look at her and felt so sorry for her that I felt like I had to help her. And we ended up going to all these meetings, and at that time and probably still in Los Angeles and Long Beach, there are a lot of Science of Mind members and they have gorgeous churches too.

Ernest Holmes, I don't know if you know him or not, but there's a lot of writers there; Emmett Fox.

Crawford: Norman Vincent Peale, is that the same sort of thing?

Teagarden: Same sort of thing.

Crawford: What person did you admire most in your life?

Teagarden: I think my mother. I don't know if I admired her as much as I loved her. She had to struggle so much, but she always put us first. She was the last to have anything new, and she was always cheerful. I loved Jack, Charles, and Cub--they were all so different. I think Charles and I were the closest in disposition, but he had a lot more drive than I did. I was more like Jack in that.

Also I take Unity, a positive-thinking magazine, like Science of the Mind, and there's a writer in there that I admire. I think I mentioned him to you--his name is James Dillet Freeman, and I turn first thing to his articles. He was married ten years to a woman with Alzheimers, and he wrote a beautiful tribute to her. I copied that and sent it to a friend who had lost his wife.

Crawford: When you look back on your life, are there things you would have done differently?

Teagarden: I shouldn't have been so cautious, because I didn't need to be. I've regretted things I didn't do more than things I did do. I probably should have stayed in New York in the thirties when my brothers were doing real well and would have been happy to have me. But I was used to being independent and didn't think I'd make it there.

Crawford: What things might have changed your life in significant ways?

Teagarden: Children would have changed my life. A lot of women were superior musicians, but with families they couldn't go on the road.

Crawford: Have you had some special treatment that would account for your positive attitude and beaming smile?

Teagarden: I've been spoiled I think because musicians had a lot of respect for my brothers. But everyone has been nice to me.

VII A CONVERSATION WITH THE TEAGARDEN SISTERS-IN-LAW

[Interview 5: January 5, 1994] ###

Memories of the Teagarden Family: The 1930s and 1940s

Crawford: This is January 4, 1994, and we're at the Sizzler in Woodland, California, talking with Norma Teagarden's sisters-in-law Irene Teagarden, widow of Cub, and LaNora Teagarden, widow of Charles, and Mary Grubbs, Irene's sister. Norma has been remembering her Aunt Barb and Helen Teagarden, her mother.

Norma: Well, I think each of us would have some stories about Mama, but we are talking about what happy people they were, and they had such a tough time. They worked so hard and had so little. But then I had one aunt who had so much more and was so moody. We loved her very much, but she just never was happy.

But Mama and Barb were. LaNora, tell some things about Mama.

Crawford: Maybe the two of you could start out by talking about when you met Norma and the Teagarden family.

LaNora: I met the Teagardens in Long Beach. It was about 1948, during the war, and my husband Charles was playing with a little band on Sundays. What was the name of that club?

Irene: Harold's.

LaNora: Harold's, yes. And all of the musicians used to come down from Hollywood Sunday afternoons, and it was jam-packed. You'd hear the best music in the world. This happened every Sunday, and it was fun. And that's where I met Charles.

Norma: And he was in the service too.

LaNora: Yes, and that's where I met Norma's mother too.

Crawford: Was Norma playing there?

LaNora: Norma was playing there and Cub. That's where I met Irene. It was just a big, happy family, and the same ones every Sunday. Of course the boys were doing that for extra.

Crawford: What was their war work at the time?

LaNora: Charles was a musician in the Air Force Band.

Crawford: What was the Ferry Command--I remember that they were attached to the Ferry Command.

Irene: The Ferry Command out of Long Beach. The 340th Ferry Command.

LaNora: Cub was a drummer for them, wasn't he?

Irene: Yes.

Life in Oklahoma City and Getting Married on the Road

Crawford: Irene, you go way back with the Teagardens. Would you talk about your first memories of the family?

Norma: Talk about that big, elaborate wedding you had.

Irene: Oh, I could talk about that. We were married in 1936--in Pampa, Texas, where we went with the touring band.

Crawford: You'd been a singer with Norma and Cub's territory band?

Irene: I went on the band as a dancer, really, to put on the floor show between numbers. But then they had this radio show on,

and that's the first time I ever sang on the radio. They said, "We need a singer. Irene." And I did that.

Norma: You knew Cub in high school, Irene.

Irene: Yes. Oh, I think Norma and I met when I was about sixteen years old. I was working in Blossom Heath. I was a dancer on the floor shows. It was a large ballroom, and they booked all the big bands through there. It was a chicken dinner place too. Nice place. But all the big bands came through there and I met them all. Of course, when you're doing three and four shows a night--

But Norma and I, we've known each other for quite a few years now. We've eaten quite a few hot dogs, chili dogs, a nickel a piece-- [laughter]

Crawford: A nickel a piece?

Irene: Five cents. We'd go over and sit in the park when we had a night off and talk.

Norma: We were lucky to have five cents!

Irene: Yes, we were lucky--it was the Depression then.

Norma: Tell about that job we had in Shawnee.

Irene: Oh, I forgot to tell about my wedding. We were all in Pampa, Texas, and we all went down to join this band. And we rented this house where we were all living and Cub came home one afternoon late and he said, "We're going to get married." [laughter]

I think I borrowed a pair of hose from Norma because mine were torn all to pieces. And we went down to the justice of the peace and you know all those policemen were in there and they watched us get married and then we had to take them all to lunch! And by the time we paid for their lunch, Cub and I were completely broke.

Crawford: Is that how Cub asked you to marry him? Just popped the question that way?

Norma: They'd been going together a long time.

- Irene: We'd been going together and we were working different jobs. He'd take a job with a band one place and I'd go to another so we didn't see each other. So we didn't go together all the time that way, but we'd run into each other once in a while. Once we worked in Denver, Colorado in a show.
- Crawford: How old were you when you got married?
- Irene: I was twenty, and Norma and Hots--they weren't married then--but he was a good friend of Cub's and it was 1936 when they were having those horrible dust storms. And in Pampa, Texas, we had to wet handkerchiefs to put over our face, and so when Cub and I got married we went home and went out on the sleeping porch [laughter]. So we had wet handkerchiefs over our face so we could sleep.
- Crawford: Where did you live after you were married?
- Irene: We were on the road, so we went to San Antone and then we went back to Oklahoma City after we went off the road. Then we lived down on Northwest 25th Street.

Life in Depression Times

- Grubbs: You all lived together then, didn't you?
- Irene: Yes, we lived together for years.
- Crawford: Was that the time when your father was there, and Norma and her husband, and Helen Teagarden?
- Irene: Yes.
- Crawford: How did that work out?
- Irene: Oh, it worked out real good. Nobody had any money, it was still Depression days, so we played badminton. We even had all the bands come out there. That backyard was filled with this badminton court.
- Norma: We had rows of toothbrushes in the bathroom! [laughter]

Crawford: How big a house was this for all of you?

Irene: And Lev Everett, he just loved music. He was an attorney that was a friend of all of ours--Norma gave him piano lessons--and this one tune, I heard it so much I didn't think that if I ever heard that tune again I'd know what to do. [laughter] But anyway he even broke his ankle--was it his ankle that he broke in the backyard?

Norma: Yes.

Irene: And he had the ambulance come out there so he could watch the game.

Crawford: How did you all do in a two-bedroom house? Who slept where?

LaNora: Night shift and day shift, wasn't it?

Norma: Well, I think we had one bedroom and you had one, and I think Ed slept in the garage, and did Mama sleep on the porch?

Irene: I think she did. It had a screen. Most of the homes did.

Grubbs: They had a door in between, though, I'm sure. [laughter]

Crawford: A little privacy. And who did all the cooking for you all?

Norma: Mama did.

Crawford: She wasn't working then?

Norma: No, after I married, she didn't have any restaurants. No. We all lived together in this little house on Park Street for a while when I was first married.

Irene: Oh, yes, we all lived on Park Street there, and even Dorothy Battenburg lived up there.

Norma: I know it.

Irene: Yes, Mama T rented rooms to all of us. Rooming house. Pay when you could. [laughter]

Norma: Mama told me that if I moved in there after I married, that I could have the one with the kitchen. So I did. I moved in

there with the kitchen and everybody else used the kitchen too! But that was all right with Hots. The more the merrier, he didn't care, and Cub was like that too.

Irene: No, we really did. We got along real well all together.

Norma: We did, and one of the reasons was, we split everything. The groceries, everybody put so much in the pot, and we never had any money problems. And everybody'd take care of their own things. Irene and I divided the housework, and Mama did the cooking. We just all got along.

Crawford: And that was about five years before you went to California. Wasn't that in about '41?

Norma: Yes, '41.

Crawford: What made Cub and Charles want to go into the service?

LaNora: Well, they had to, because they were going to be drafted. Charles had a big band, and at that time all the guys started being drafted or they left to go into the band. So he had no band and he just followed them.

Crawford: So they were able to go in and just do their music?

Irene: Yes, and Charlie went to the Azores Islands, and Cub went to Palm Springs.

LaNora: While Charles was in the Azores, he still had the band over there--he was the leader of the band there.

Crawford: So he was stationed there--was that after you were married?

LaNora: Yes, after Long Beach. They broke up that band and some went to the Azores and some went to Palm Springs.

Working in New York: 1939

Crawford: Was there ever a time when all three were in Jack's band?

Norma: Yes, Cub was in Jack's band in 1938--

Irene: 1939. Yes, we were in New York with the first band.

Norma: Yes, right after he left Whiteman.

LaNora: Yes, Charlie was still with Whiteman at that time.

Crawford: What was that like, being in New York?

Irene: Well, it was an experience all right. Everybody knew I was new, because I was looking at all the tall buildings all the time.

Crawford: Did you sing with that band?

Irene: Not at all. I went to see all the shows that they did. They did the [World's] Fair, you know--the fair was going on at that time. And we had to take them food sometimes, because they were doing so many jobs, that they couldn't get food. They wouldn't have time to eat.

Crawford: What were the audiences like?

Irene: They were terrific. They appreciated music. Of course, that was a good time to be in New York because all the big bands were starting. Every one of them--Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw--all starting up at the time. So they all lived at the same hotel and each big band as they'd go around, one would leave and one would come in, so they'd run into each other.

Crawford: Where did they stay?

Irene: At the Forest Hotel on 48th Street.

The Move to California: 1941

Crawford: Were you there until you moved to California?

Irene: We came back in '40, and went to California in April of '41.

Crawford: Who went first?

Norma: Cub and Irene.

Grubbs: I went first, and then they all came to California. That's the truth.

Crawford: To Long Beach? That must have been a pretty community then.

Irene: It was. Gorgeous.

Crawford: And that is where you bought your first home, isn't it, Norma?

Norma: Yes, the first house was in Pennswood. Must have been about 1944, 1945. A little tract house. Let's see, we had Mama and lots of other people too.

Crawford: Who else?

Norma: Well, Ed was there, too [Irene's father]; he lived in the garage. And I can't believe it, but June and Don Reno lived with us for a while, and so did Frank Harrington. He used to go around telling everyone, "I'm living with Norma," and I'd say, "Please rephrase that." [laughter]

Crawford: How did they happen to live with you? [laughter]

Norma: I don't know.

LaNora: I think it was Hotshot.

Norma: I think probably Hotshot.

Irene: It was like coming to Long Beach; we rented that little place on Tenth Street there, and everybody from Oklahoma City that was ever a musician or anything, they came there and stayed. I'm not kidding.

Crawford: Did you enjoy that?

Norma: Yes, a little one-bedroom place with a courtyard. When we came to California they had to kick out Dale Jones and his wife, because they were there.

Irene: What do you call those beds that let down from the wall?

LaNora: Murphy beds.

Irene: We had a murphy bed, and it was constantly filled--full.

Crawford: Where were you, LaNora?

LaNora: We were down on Fifth Street in Long Beach.

Crawford: Were you working as a nurse?

LaNora: Yes, I worked at a clinic.

Norma: Yes, Hotshot went to your clinic, and he said, "You know, there's the nicest girl [works there] and I bet Charles would like her." And he introduced her to Charles and Charles never looked at anybody from then on but her!

Marriage to Charlie Teagarden

Crawford: Do you have a wedding story?

LaNora: We were married in the Mormon Chapel in L.A. Our best man was John Smith, he was a trombone player, and he was a Mormon. John Smith and his wife stood up with us, and Granny played the piano.

Crawford: Granny? Mama T? What did she play? [laughter]

LaNora: "The Wedding March," "Here Comes the Bride"--church music--whatever, she always went into that, you know. Gospel. Cub and Irene were there. You weren't there, Norma.

Norma: Where was I?

LaNora: Working. You were invited.

Norma: Was I on the road?

LaNora: No, you and Hots had a job. I don't know--was it San Pedro?

Crawford: How about Jack Teagarden in your memory, Irene?

Irene: Jack was a very, very nice person. He was really too good. And he was bashful. You wouldn't think that, but he was.

Crawford: The most bashful of the three?

Irene: I think so. Well, they bought a home there in Long Beach, and then he worked out of town mostly of the time after the time they came there, so we didn't see as much of him in Long Beach as we did in other places, really.

Remembering Mama T

Crawford: LaNora, Helen Teagarden stayed with you a lot in Las Vegas?

LaNora: Mama T used to come and visit Charles and I in Las Vegas, and she would stay sometimes, oh, six weeks, and I always did her sewing for her.

We were sewing one day and she brought up the fact that different people thought that Jack might have Indian blood, and she was talking about it, and I said to her, I said, "Mama, are you sure that one of those Oklahoma indians didn't get you?" And she sat for a while, and she said, "Well, I don't think so." [laughter] She had to think about it.

Irene: Norma, did you tell her about that time when we got the apartment and put Mama T on the train to go to Houston?

Norma: [Laughter] There was this fellow--one of the customers in the restaurant--and he was just crazy about Mama. And Mama and I'd gone down to visit him a couple of times in Houston. He took us down to his office, and he was a Harvard graduate and he had all these books and things he had chosen for our hotel room that Mama would never read and had never thought about in her whole life.

When he showed us his office, I noticed in his desk drawer, when he pulled it open, that all his pen points were pointed in the same way, and I thought that he and Mama'd never make it!

Anyway, Mama decided to get married, so she left, and Irene and I got an apartment, and we were just going to have a great time. The two of us single, you know, and having a ball, and we looked up one day, and here comes Mama back. She got to thinking about it--he was a lot older than she was.

She had a boyfriend in Oklahoma City that she'd gone with for a long time, and he had three young children--he was divorced--and Mama had three too, so they never did marry because they never did figure they could put the two of them together. Anyway, so here comes Mama and Albert was driving the little Ford that Mama had driven down to Houston, and she said, "I was just afraid I'd have to end up taking care of him."

But he was much older, and he had a lovely home in Houston, and he'd already arranged with his children a sort of premarital settlement, and he had her well provided for, and it wasn't six weeks until he was crossing the street, and some car hit him, and you know it killed him. Anyway, Irene and I thought we were home free, and then here came Mama.

LaNora: She was having a better time with you all--probably thought she'd miss something.

About Discrimination in the South

Irene: We were in that same apartment when Mary Lou Williams came.

Norma: Yes, and Pha Terrell. He was with the Andy Kirk Band, and they kept coming over to our apartment, and Irene was picking up some dance steps from him. And he had been a singer, and that's the year of "Til the Real Thing Came Along." It was a real hit, and Pha Terrell was the one that did that with Andy Kirk's Band.

And with Mary Lou--anyway, our landlady jumped on us for letting colored people come to see us.

Crawford: Oh, you mentioned that. Irene, you might tell that story you just told me about shopping with her.

Irene: Street's Department Store. And she said they always wanted to sell her some real odd dresses when she went in there. I said, "I'd be happy to go," but I was treated terrible in Street's Department Store when I took her in there.

Crawford: What happened?

Irene: Well, they didn't want to wait on her, and didn't want her trying on the clothes. That's the way I took it. But anyway, we found her one, and they sold it to her anyway, but it was really kind of bad the way they treated colored people.

Crawford: That was in Oklahoma City?

Irene: Yes. I don't remember what year, I wasn't married yet, but it was in the thirties. Did you tell her about the time Jack went into Texas? They went into Texas and they wouldn't let Louis on the stage, and they wouldn't cater to the colored people at all. They couldn't find places to live and they wouldn't even let him on the stage. So Jack refused to play, and walked out. There was a lot of things happening in those days.

Crawford: Did you see any of that in California in the forties?

LaNora: No. Well, the war changed a lot of things.

Grubbs: Well, I was a buyer for Buffums, and I was taken out to dinner and it was an elegant place, and that's the first time I saw a colored man take a white woman out to dinner, and that's been years ago. You saw it in California but you didn't see it in Oklahoma.

Norma: Yes, but even here during the fifties--one time I was playing a real exclusive steak house in Los Angeles--I can't remember what it was--but a friend of mine wanted to bring Lucille Armstrong--Louis' wife--where I was playing to have dinner. And Louis said, "You better ask your boss about it first," and it hadn't occurred to me. And he said, "As far as I'm concerned, that would be just fine," but he said, "but I'd rather you wouldn't."

And so I had to tell them and make some excuse. And he told me later that a lot of places they went to, there'd be a lot of empty tables, and the waiters would run right over and say, "This table's reserved."

Crawford: Did they know who it was?

Norma: Yes, they did, but maybe the customers didn't know. I'm sure that happened to Louis a lot, even though when they went to

Europe, they were idolized and thirty thousand people came to the airport when they got there, including the King of Sweden.

Then they'd come home and not get to stay in a hotel! Oh, but one of the most poignant things--it really got me--Tony Bennett was on a program not too long ago, and he was talking about Louis. He said, "Louis, everybody just loves you. There's no race about it. Everybody is just crazy about you. What do you attribute that to?" And Louis said, "Being a white man's nigger." It's the first time I every thought about him being a little bitter, because he didn't have that.

LaNora: The thing I remember about Louis was just after the civil rights and the colored people could come into the hotels, and Charles was playing with one of the relief bands at the time in Las Vegas, and Louis was in town. And he came backstage and came over, and I started to shake hands with him, and he threw my hand off and kissed me. That was the first time they could do that and it startled me.

Crawford: You knew him?

LaNora: Oh, yes. But that was the first time I felt they felt could do such things. You know, kiss a white person if they wanted to.

Norma and Her Brothers

Crawford: Well, I asked Norma during our talks which one of the brothers was most like her and I won't tell you what she said, but I'd like to know what you think.

LaNora: I think she and Charles.

Crawford: That's what she said too.

LaNora: They were both bookish.

Norma: Our noses in books all the time!

LaNora: And they always seemed a little closer.

Norma: In age, too. And we had a lot of the same ways, too. I think we were both conservative, and neither one of us--I don't know, we just understood each other.

LaNora: Seems so.

Norma: But I loved Cub. Cub was just marvelous, though.

LaNora: Charles did too.

Irene: And later on Cub sure did have his nose in the books, too. He did.

Norma: I had a lot of admiration for Cub, because when he quit the music business, he quit, and he started out by climbing telephone poles and going under houses with General Telephone, and he worked himself up to head of personnel.

Irene: He went back to the university in Long Beach and then he went to University of Utah, and UCLA.

Crawford: Did he miss music after he gave it up?

Irene: No, he really didn't. He gave his drums away, you remember, and he really didn't ever mention it.

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Crawford: Norma, did you ever consider giving up music as a career?

Norma: No, I knew I would miss it terribly. I've thought of what it would be like not to play, and it would be hard. Charles told me that it took him a long time to get over missing playing.

Irene: Cub didn't mention it after he left. I think he was more interested in learning and getting ahead and trying different things. Now he was one who was interested in seeing what was on the other side of that mountain. He really would--he'd go out of his way to do that.

Crawford: His work had lots of responsibilities, didn't it, with Utah Construction and Kennecott?

Norma: Cub kept looking ahead to that next job--that next big one--and kept aiming for it. Where some of his friends settled for

where they were and took stock, like General Telephone and everything, and ended up probably much better off without the stress. He was so meticulous.

I remember one time he got a job with the WPA during the Depression, and he was writing music--that was his job. He had never written anything--drum music is different than flutes and violins and things, and he just went to work and in about a week or two he had the most beautiful script you ever saw. Just perfect.

Irene: They put them up for the others to look at and learn. They put them up on the wall. But he liked things like that--something different. He did a job well if he was going to take a job.

Crawford: Well, Charles was a perfectionist too--he has that reputation, doesn't he?

LaNora: Yes, and when Charles stopped playing, he went into the union.

Crawford: And then he couldn't play, as a union official?

LaNora: Couldn't play, but he enjoyed it, and everything had to be done just right. He made the transition; in fact, he looked forward to putting his horn down and going into another phase of it.

Crawford: Was that full-time employment with the union?

LaNora: Oh, yes. He was assistant to the president. And he liked the daytime hours.

Crawford: Was it a stressful life when they were playing?

LaNora: You just adjust to their hours. I mean, I did, and I guess Irene did, too, she's here! [laughter]

Crawford: She survived!

LaNora:: But once it was a routine, it didn't seem all that hard. Everybody thinks it was real hard. They'll say, "Oh, what a hard life," but it wasn't really.

Road Stories

- Norma: If you were on the road, it was tough. Remember that time we went to Canada and New York, and we had Jim and Joe with us? And Columbus, Ohio? [laughter] The babies, Joe and Jim; Jim was probably about three and Joe was two, and I took Jim out for three months, and I couldn't get home fast enough.
- Crawford: Three months on the road? That was full-time. And then you were taking care of Joe, Norma?
- Norma:: Verna Jean really had to take care of Joe--his half sister--I think Addie and them just carried her along mainly as babysitter.
- Irene: Tell about the time we took that job down in San Antonio and the guy ran off with all the money.
- Norma: That was down in Dallas when we didn't have any money. Jack Vollmer. Skipped the band and left, and we went home in a truck.
- Crawford: You never mentioned his name before. Now we know his name!
- Norma: Jack Vollmer, that's right.
- Irene: And the trumpet player, remember, he did it in San Antonio too, because we didn't have any money. He went down the street and he was going to get us something to eat, and he came back with this wine. [laughter] What was his name--he was a good trumpeter.
- Grubb: Did he have your money to buy the wine?
- Irene: No, he went down there and swiped it! But there was a fig tree there, and we ate figs.
- Norma: You and Cub were married when we went to Dallas, so it must have been '36.
- Irene: Mama was with us, and when we got to Dallas I left my coat; Cub left his trumpet--

Norma: I left my rings and watch.

Crawford: For security?

Irene: Yes, at the hotel. I don't remember how we got the car--

Norma: A truck driver drove us home.

Irene: Yes, we had to take turns sitting in the back of the truck, I remember. From Dallas to Oklahoma City.

Norma: It was December and it was cold back there, and we'd take turns there and then sitting in the cab, to keep warm. When I got back I had about \$350 coming to me--at \$25 a week. I didn't want to draw, like everybody else did.

Irene: They were smart!

Norma: You're not kidding--I wanted all mine in one lump. But then I woke up and I didn't have any. When I got back, I borrowed Mama's car to go get my baggage. It was in the lobby of a hotel downtown, and I ran out of gas. [laughter]

I sat in that car and I said, "This is the last time in my whole life that I'm going to be broke." And I went to work in a dancing school for fifty cents an hour, and I was working at night someplace--Ma Kendall's for \$10 or \$12 a week--and I saved \$35 that year by going down to the savings and loan with five cents practically. And I've never been broke since. It scared me so bad, and I didn't realize that I had good borrowing value on my life insurance policy, and I'd been paying Mama's life insurance, and I had borrowing value on any of those. I didn't think about that, but I was just flat broke that night, and gas was ten cents a gallon.

LaNora: But that was the Depression, and there just wasn't much around.

Norma: The funny thing about it was that there were these two children that Mama used to babysit, Leverett Edwards' children, one of them married Charles Murphy, who is an ABC commentator, and all through the Vietnamese War he was on and he's still on quite a bit. And the other one married a senator from Texas--those two girls.

One Crazy Year: 1948

Crawford: Norma, I remember you told me that when you were sick, Cub and Irene moved in with you to help you recover.

Irene: I was with you during the operation, and I had to go back to the hospital and I borrowed Mary Bell's car and I went from Long Beach to Pasadena to go and get her, and I think I was so frightened I didn't know what to do.

I was driving about five miles an hour back because they told her to be very careful about her neck. But she was doing something, yanked her head back and tore the stitches.

Norma: I thought it was in their office.

Irene: Yes, but you broke them twice. Fainted.

Norma: That was one crazy year.

Irene: But I never will forget when she was coming out that Hotshot had to go to work, and Mama T had walked those halls until she just couldn't stay any longer, and I said, "Take Mama T home, because she's tired," and I was there with her and--I'll tell one on you. And she said: "Where are my teeth?" Don't let anybody in here." But she was in and out. And she was so sick!

Crawford: How long in the hospital?

Irene: A good two or three weeks.

Norma: It seems to me that you were there when I had that first operation, that hysterectomy, weren't you, LaNora? Charles stayed with me, then.

Crawford: When was that?

Norma: Just before this!

Crawford: 1948?

Norma: Yes.

Irene: And she got out of that and went down and had that osteomyelitis.

LaNora: And got divorced, all at the same time.

Norma: I always think about 1948 as a year when you'd get up and then get knocked down again.

Crawford: So you stayed with LaNora and Charles?

Norma: No, they stayed with me. I had my house; everyone bought their own homes, but they came and took care of me.

Irene: When did Papa get that goose? He went down and bought that goose, you remember, to have for Christmas. And there wasn't anything to do but for Mama T and I to cook that goose, and we poured so much goose grease off that thing I didn't think we'd ever get through. Were you there at that dinner?

Norma: I couldn't eat on Christmas Eve. New Year's Eve, I mean. Everybody worked New Year's Eve--so I was just lying on the couch by myself, and everybody who knew me figured that'd be my last year. [laughter] And you never saw so many presents in your life!

Crawford: Little did they know!

Irene: And they're all gone and you're here.

Norma: Yes, all the presents are gone.

Crawford: How long did it take you to recuperate?

Norma: Well, I still had the bandages on when I went to work in the Bomb Shelter.

Irene: They took everything but the jugular vein on that side. It was awful.

Norma: We all lived together on Walnut with Mimi, Irene's mother. That was in Long Beach, at another of our locations. We sold Pennswood and moved in with Irene and Cub on Walnut until we

bought our house. So then we bought this other house, and we hadn't been in it any time before Hots and I split up.

LaNora: That's when all your trouble started. Just wham, wham, wham.

Norma: After I got all the money paid out, I gave him all the cash and put another mortgage on the house and gave him the car, and got sick.

Crawford: How long to recover that time?

Norma: I don't think too long.

Irene: She had to take those exercises with those balls. They went through the muscles in her shoulder, and she had to do those exercises for quite some time. But she was good. She worked that arm out, and it wasn't too long before she was playing again.

LaNora: She never did give up.

Norma: That's when I got interested in the Science of Mind. I went over to see one of my pupils before I started playing, because he wasn't doing too well and I wanted to talk to his mother about it. She said she took one look at me, because she was sick, and said, "I'm going to have to get out of bed and help that girl." And I took one look at her and thought, "I've got to help that woman." And we ended up terrific friends and going to all these Science of Mind things.

LaNora: That really did help you--you've hung on all these years. When she got interested in Science of Mind, I think that's really the thing that kept her up.

Remembering the Bob Crosby and Paul Whiteman Bands

Norma: And Charles, he got interested in it, and Jack was teasing me about it once, and Charles said, "Don't get me in with that; I'm with her." Because he'd had real nice things happen to him. When he went with Crosby, he wanted to get off the night kick, and I said, "The right thing will happen," and it wasn't

any time until he got that day TV show. And that was a real nice show.

Crawford: He was with the Crosby Band almost five years?

Norma: Three. He enjoyed it a lot, only he did not get to play the kind of music he likes to play. That's the reason he left the Crosby Band and went to Las Vegas with the Mickey Katz Band, which played jazz.

Crawford: And Crosby's was a show.

LaNora: It wasn't exactly what he liked. There wasn't anything wrong with the job, but he wanted to go where the action was. So that's what we did.

Crawford: Did they do studio work?

LaNora: Charles did.

Norma: He did the Dinah Shore and the Chevrolet thing for a long time.

Irene: Remember when we went back to see that Paul Whiteman one, and they were still with Paul Whiteman, and we left Oklahoma City and we all pooled our money? You, myself and Mama T, and when we got there we all stayed in the one hotel room--was it Arkansas or Missouri that they played?

Norma: I remember when Whiteman came through Oklahoma City, Cub and I would go sneaking around between the shows, and Jack and Charles would scoot around and let us in and we'd go in the back under the stage--it was really dirty back there, with all the ropes and things because it was one of those rising stages.

We'd go in, sneak in, and Mama was going in nearly every day. And I said, "Mama, how are you getting in?" And she said, "Well, I just go up and tell them who I am." [laughter] They were giving her the best seats in the house--Mama taking her neighbors--and the rest of us sneaking around!

Irene: I remember when Billy Gregg, when he booked the Whiteman band in during one of the worst blizzards, and Paul Whiteman was real nice, because people just couldn't get out there, and he didn't charge the full price. I was working in the office

then, I'd worked for them since I was fourteen. I did the floor show--the three floor shows--they didn't have any children so they took me on. I sold the tickets up front, greeted people, and that.

Thoughts about Norma Teagarden

Crawford: Well, I'm going to ask one final question here and have Irene and LaNora and Mary describe Norma Teagarden.

Irene: She's a wonderful person. Everything about her. I've never seen such a survivor of things! She takes everything right in stride, and she's able to throw off things.

Grubbs: I've seen her when she had her downs, financial and health, but it never really did bring her down. She always pulled herself back and had a good outlook on life. And I think she's always been so forward with people--you always sort of knew where you stood with her. She's a fighter--she's a real fighter.

And she loves her family. Here's two examples sitting right here. They're her sisters-in-law, and you see how close they are after all these years.

Crawford: Mary, you were close to the family during the years and weren't an integral part of it, but what did you see?

Grubbs: They just worked together.

LaNora: Norma seemed the core of it. She was the strong one who held it together.

Grubbs: Jack was their criterion, but Norma was the one that always got it together. Still is.

LaNora: She's the best friend I ever had.

Crawford: You can't say more than that. Thank you all very much.

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ON TOUR WITH THE JACK TEAGARDEN BAND--1943-1945, 1952-1955

1943

May and June, on tour in Wichita, Kansas; Lincoln, Nebraska; Spokane, and Seattle, Washington; Vancouver, B.C.; San Francisco (Golden Gate Theatre) and Los Angeles (Orpheum Theatre), California; Denver (Lakeside Park), Colorado
 August, Houston, Fort Worth (Bryan Air Force Base), San Antonio (Majestic Theatre) Dallas, Austin (Texas University), Texas
 October, several weeks of one-nighters
 December, San Francisco (Golden Gate Theatre)

1944

March and April, working in Long Beach (not with the band)
 May, on tour through Pacific Northwest
 June, Big Bear Lake and San Francisco, California
 July, Culver City (Casa Mañana), California
 August, Southgate (Trianon Ballroom), California; Pecos, Marta, Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; Michigan City, Indiana; Jackson, Michigan
 September, Cedar Point, Youngstown, Ohio; Mckeesport (Vogue Terrace), Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Hamilton, New York City, New York; Manchester (Coconut Grove), New Hampshire; Boston, Weymouth, Massachusetts
 October, Schenectady, New York; Holyoke, Springfield, Boston, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; Baltimore, Maryland; Greenville, Lorrinsburg, North Carolina; Miami (The Frolics), Florida
 November, Jacksonville, Florida; Columbia, Sumter, South Carolina; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Martinsville, Charlottesville, Virginia, Cumberland, Maryland; Philadelphia, Scranton, Pennsylvania; New York City
 December, Boston, Massachusetts; Charleston, South Carolina; Baltimore, Maryland; Anniston, Birmingham, Alabama; Ardmore, Oklahoma

1945

January and February, one-nighters in the Los Angeles area
 March, Los Angeles (Orpheum Theatre), Hollywood, California
 April, Sacramento (McClelland Air Base), Montague, California; Medford, Tillamook, Salem, Portland (Jantzen Beach), Oregon; Tacoma (Evergreen and Century Ballrooms), Everett (Trianon Ballroom), Bellingham (Seven Seas), Whitby Island (free show and Navy dance), Seattle, Yakima, Walla Walla, and Spokane (free shows for Air Force), Washington; Victoria, B.C.

May, Seattle, Tacoma, Washington; Portland, Bend, Albany (Cottonwood Ballroom), Roseberg, Oregon; Eureka (Armory), California

June, Fresno (Camp Hamilton), Salinas, San Jose, Vallejo, Lamour (free Army show), Hanford, San Francisco (Golden Gate Theatre and free show at canteen), Oakland (Shrine Auditorium), Murrock (Army Air Base), San Diego, Los Angeles (Trianon Ballroom), California

July, Demming (free show at Camp Demming), New Mexico; El Paso, Pyote, Hondo, San Antonio (Brooks Field and Randolph Field), Austin (Bergstrom Field), Bryan (Bryan Army Air Field), Waco (Army Air Base), Killeen (Camp Hood), Longview (free show at Harmon Hospital, Palm Island Dance Hall), Dallas (Dallas Athletic Club), Forth Worth (New Casino, free show for Red Cross), Texas

August, Dallas (Plantation Club), Houston, Pyote, Midland (free hospital show), Big Springs, Childress (free shows), Amarillo, Texas; Lawton (Fort Sill), Clinton (Navy dance), Norman (Navy dance and University of Oklahoma), Oklahoma; Wichita Falls (Shepherd Field), Corpus Christi (free show, Walden Field), Kingsville, Texas

September, Harlingen, Hondo, San Antonio, San Angelo, Vernon (benefit for war chest), Lubbock, Childress, Paris (Camp Maxie), Texas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Lincoln, Nebraska; Kansas City (Play-Mor Ballroom), Missouri; Topeka (NCO and Officer's Clubs), Kansas; Hastings, Nebraska; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Eddleston (Hub Ballroom), Illinois; Swisher, Iowa; Milwaukee (Devines Ballroom), Wisconsin; St. Louis (Tune Town Ballroom), Missouri; Fruitport (Pavilion), Romelus, Michigan; South Bend, Indiana

October, Springfield (Reilly Hospital), St. Joseph, Missouri; Sioux Falls (Strother Field), Huron, Aberdeen (Watertown Ballroom), South Dakota; Great Bend (Ninth Army Air Base), Pratt, Kansas; Omaha, Nebraska

1952

Los Angeles area

1953

September and October, Rockford and Chicago, Illinois; Columbus, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

November, New York (Recording); Middleburg, Vermont; Toronto, Canada; Detroit, Michigan

December, Houston, Dallas, and Ft. Worth, Texas;

December 15 to March 15 (1954), Hollywood (Royal Room); San Francisco (Hangover Club, broadcasting)

1954

January 1 to March 15, Royal Room, Hollywood

March 26 to April 26, the Hangover in San Francisco

April 26 to August 1, the Casuals, Hollywood

August 1 to August 26, the Three Dells, Milwaukee

August 26 to September 5, Toronto
 September 5 to October 5, Basin Street, New York
 October 5 to October 13, Bali Kea, Pittsburgh
 October 13 to October 24, Columbus, Ohio
 October 24 to November 4, Meadowbrook, New York
 November 4, Hartford, Connecticut
 November 5, Providence, Rhode Island
 November 5 to November 7, Hartford, Connecticut
 November 8 to November 14, New York (Recording)
 November 14 to December 8, the Savoy, Boston
 December 8 to December 23, Bali Kea, Pittsburgh
 December 23 to January 14 (1955), New York

1955

March 11 to April 21, Jazz City, Hollywood
 April 28 to June 11, the Hangover, San Francisco
 June 24, ABC television show
 June 25, Washington, D.C.
 July 7 to August 7, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 August 20 to August 28, Wisconsin Dells
 September 2, Warsaw, Indiana
 September 8 to October 2, Jazz City, San Francisco
 September, 28, KPIX TV

RECORDINGS

The Jack Teagarden Band, 1944 (Decca 8304)
 1954 (Jazztone J 1222)

Jack Teagarden, One Hundred Years From Today, 1990 (Grudge Music Group Inc,
 CD4523 2F). Live from the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival.

Norma Teagarden Greatest Hits (Teagarden Records, 2483 Queen Street East,
 Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4E1H9)

International Traditional Jazz Festival, Breda, Holland, 1976

Golden Horn of Jack Teagarden (DECCA DL74540)

Big T and the Condon Gang (Pumpkin Productions, Miami, Florida 33155)

Jack Teagarden and his Orchestra, 1944 (Alamac Recording Company OSR2406)

Jack Teagarden Jazz Original (Affinity, 156-166, Ziderton Road, London,
 SE15)

Bix Lives, 1976 (Davenport Jazz Band, Iowa)

RADIO APPEARANCES

May 23, 1982, the Marian McPartland Show, NPR

August 2, 1990, Jim Cullum's "River Walk," San Antonio

TELEVISION APPEARANCES

KPIX television, Los Angeles, 1952

"You're Never Too Old" (In Honor of Helen Teagarden)

KQED television, San Francisco (Gene Nelson, moderator)

AWARDS

Merit Award, Long Beach Veterans Hospital, 1951

Honorary Doctorate of Music, the London Institute for Applied Research,
London, June 15, 1973

Service award, South Bay Traditional Jazz Award Society, August 27, 1978

City and County of San Francisco Award of Merit, May 13, 1980

Proclamation of Norma Teagarden Day by Mayor Dianne Feinstein, April 28,
1981

Empress of the Tenth Annual Jazz Festival, May 1983

Service award, Board of Directors, New Orleans Jazz Club of Northern
California, November 17, 1985

Certificate of Honor, International Institute for the Study of Women in
Music, California State University, Northridge, March 8, 1986

Jubilator at the Pismo Beach Jubilee, 1991

Performing Arts Award, San Francisco and All That Jazz on Fillmore
Festival, 1993

Maggie Kuhn Award, 1993

Honoree, Smithsonian Institution tribute to jazz: The Swing Age, 1993

Women's Ability, Vision and Excellence (WAVE) Award, 1994

The Greening Of Teagarden

Elder San Francisco jazz pianist
has traveled a long road

BY JEFF KALISS

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

WEDNESDAY nights at the Washington Square Bar & Grill are a trip back in time, to when people were gracious and jazz was straightforward. Just give a look and a listen to the house pianist, Norma Teagarden, who's held the midweek spot there for 14 of her 78 years.

"You just sort of have to play the way you are," says the modest Teagarden in a throaty drawl bred in her native Vernon, Texas. The way she approaches the "peeana" is a traditional mixture of Dixie, swing, and stride techniques that reflects six decades of work in clubs and on the road, sometimes in the company of famed brother Jack and her less well-known siblings Charles and Cub.

"Our family was always very close," says the last survivor of the Teagarden clan. "My mother thought we were the most wonderful things in the world. She could never do anything financially for us. In fact, it was always the other way. But she sure did love us."

The musically talented mother was married at 13, gave birth to her first son (Jack) at 15, and lost her trumpet-playing husband at 28. She moved the family to Chapel, Neb., supporting them by playing piano for silent movies. Jack ran the projector while the younger kids huddled in the front-row seats. This avoided the expense of a baby sitter.

THE elder Teagarden trained herself on a variety of instruments, and her home-brewed techniques influenced Jack and Charles' later approaches to the trombone and trumpet. The kids were already performing by the time they got to "grammar school," and Norma landed her first club date in Oklahoma City when she was 14.

"It was way out of town, and I had to take a streetcar to get there," she recalls. "We got through about 2 o'clock in the morning, and the band just left with their dates. I was so furious at those fellas! And years later, when I came back, gee, they came out practically with flags to meet me, braggin' because they'd played with me. I had to grit my teeth."

"It was much harder for a woman to get work when I started. They'd use anybody before they'd use a woman."

After high school, she joined a "territory band" in New Mexico, "playing Demolay dances, Job's Daughters, Lions Club, all up and down the state." Cub, four years younger than Norma, played drums with the band while finishing his own education. Jack, who'd left home and started his climb to fame with Peck's Bad Boys, came through and sat in with the provincial group, somewhat to his sister's embarrassment.

THE FEMALE Teagarden learned by listening to lots of bands, making summer trips with Cub to Chicago and New York, where Jack was gaining acclaim with the Ben Pollack and Red Nichols groups. But she never emulated a particular pianist. "I think you just sort of do it by doin'," she claims.

"I did things in the music business and put up with jobs that my brothers never would have done," she adds, referring to her stints of teaching, playing in dance studios, and working with lesser-known bands. "My brothers didn't have the patience to do it. But I couldn't stand being broke."

Cub followed his sister's move back to Oklahoma, where she fronted several of her own groups in the '30s, one of which included her first husband, the late guitarist Charles Gilruth. In 1942, Charles and Cub joined the Army Air Force in Long Beach, and their sister moved west to be near them. Jack and their mother soon followed, and "for the first time since we were little kids, we were all livin' in the same town."

By this time Jack had his own band, and his sister and her husband toured with him for three years. She also worked the active club scene in Long Beach and San Pedro, where she was sometimes joined by her mother. "She'd come out and bring the house down playing rags and things," remembers Teagarden.

After World War II, Cub abandoned music for a successful career as a personnel manager, and Norma decided to part ways with her guitar-playing husband. "You have the same hours, you talk the same language, and you have the same problems" is how she characterizes a marriage of musicians. "But being a musician is sometimes pretty impractical, and I was the more practical of the two of us. ... It seemed like everybody was having fun except me, and I was having too much work to do."

Brother Charles enjoyed a long stint with Bob Crosby's Bobcats and the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, including a weekly TV program, but never matched Jack's level of notoriety or recording output. His sister, who never felt herself hampered by Jack's shadow, regrets the effect on Charles. "His standard was so high for himself," she says. The minute he picked up that horn he gave it all he had. It was kind of exhausting. Jack was much more easy-going, but Charles was tense. If I made a mistake, I'd rather be with Jack than Charles."

In 1955, Teagarden married advertising executive John Friedlander, whom she met while on tour in the Midwest. She joined him in Milwaukee, but they relocated to San Francisco a few years later. Teagarden played occasional casuals and New Year's Eve gigs and taught out of her home. The couple lived in Presidio Heights and Cow Hollow before moving to their current high-rise condo on Cathedral Hill.

"John didn't want me to work too much," says Teagarden, explaining her temporary retirement from performing. "But finally he got tired of listening to bad piano pupils and said, 'I'd rather you worked at night.'"

Teagarden took the Washington Square gig in 1975, not knowing it would turn into much more than just a few months' diversion. She also became a regular performer at festivals and meetings of societies devoted to so-called trad jazz, based in preswing Dixieland. In 1981, Teagarden received a proclamation from Mayor Dianne Feinstein, whose daughter had been a piano pupil. Two years later, Teagarden was crowned Empress of Old Sacramento's annual Dixieland Festival.

But the hardworking pianist refuses to have her style confined to Dixieland or any other single genre.

Her keyboard trademark is a strong striding left hand, against which the right hand provides intricate counterpoints. "All my life I've used my left hand differently than they do now," she notes. "Some people nowadays are like lightning with their right hand, and don't do anything much with their left hand ... but I like show tunes and a whole spectrum of things that you learn after being in the business for some time."

But rock has gone too far, she believes. "I have a hearing loss, and I think most of it is from being in big bands where you're around so much noise," she admits. "But these rock kids are gonna be deaf."

Washington Square itself is "noisy and hard to play in," she notes. "But it's an off-night for me. And I have weekends open when I can work if I want to, or go out somewhere ... and the best thing is the bosses and the help, who are real nice. They never tell you what to play, and you just take your intermissions when you think you should."

Teagarden's fans usually request tables close to the piano in order to avoid the whiskey-soaked table talk that fills the popular North Beach bar. Dropping by often are musicians, locals and those passing through town, such as tenor saxophonist Fritz Hartman, a contemporary.

Many of these Teagarden devotees will be joining her at a special tribute next Sunday at the Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society, which will have her playing in a much quieter venue. You can also catch her sitting at the Steinway in Nordstrom's. But Teagarden's departed brothers would probably be more comfortable jamming with her at the Washbag Wednesdays, where the tradition thrives.



Becoming Older

By Mauree Jane Perry

Finding a sense of balance in life

NORMA TEAGARDEN loves her Wednesday nights. She also loves her husband, their cozy flat in San Francisco, vacations to Hawaii, friends, foreign films, dining out, a lot of things.

But on Wednesday nights especially, the Empress of Jazz and the Queen of Stride Piano, as she has been called, celebrates life.

She dresses in one of her elegant, tailored outfits, kisses her husband goodnight and drives downtown. And then, as soon as the clock strikes nine at the Washington Square Bar and Grill, one of the City's most popular restaurants, she goes to work — sliding onto the piano bench and rolling out those jazzy rhythms for which she's become famous.

By 10 o'clock, Teagarden's taken only one short break. By 11, her inner circle of loyal fans have arrived. By midnight, a bass player, and maybe a trumpeter or two have settled in to jam with her. And by 1 a.m., Teagarden says, she has received at least as much pleasure as her customers keep telling her she gives.

At 73 years of age, Norma Teagarden, tall, trim, with clear baby-blue eyes and short hair streaked with gray, is the only active member of America's great jazz family, the Teagarden clan of Texas.

Twentieth century America did not spawn many female jazz musicians, yet Teagarden was one of the first to play jazz piano with an all-male band. She was also one of the earliest to have had her own all-female band. Mayors have honored her. Music authorities have written about her. Jazz festivals continue to feature and crown her.

But what makes her additionally and particularly rare, now, is her perspective and sense of balance.

"This is a nice time in my life," she says, her throaty, smiling voice tracing back to her Oklahoma roots.

"Some musicians, like my brother Charles, stop performing before they actually have to because they would rather quit while they're at the top. Others keep driving themselves to always produce more and more no matter what they've accomplished. But I'm in neither of those two places. I just like to play.

"I know that if I go too long without it, I miss it. Tunes and melodies start going in my head and I've just got to get them out." She laughs at her own earnestness, something she has learned to do.

Indeed, life has taught Teagarden many lessons. There was a time, during the Depression, when if she didn't play, she didn't eat. But experience has also taught her there are other things not necessarily instead of but in addition to music.

One of the most important is her husband John Friedlander, a man eight years younger who fell in love with and married her almost 30 years ago after a three-week courtship. Also important are her friendships and the month she spends every year in Hawaii.

How did she learn to relax and enjoy?

"That first time I got sick, back in '48 with cancer of the thyroid, was tough," she says. "I owe a lot of my recovery to finally understanding why I got sick, all that pressure and all, and finally realizing the importance of . . . well, positive thinking I guess you could call it. I certainly believe in medicine, but prayer helped me too.

"I don't mean a begging kind of prayer, where you're asking for something for yourself. But I do believe in the kind of prayer that lets you understand and helps you let go. 'Not my will, but thine' kind of thinking is important.

"Of course," she adds with one of her easy smiles, "I can't always manage to do that, but it's the goal."

Reaching out to help others has also been one of her ways of coping. Five years ago, she discovered she had cancer of the breast. After a radical mastectomy, she joined the outreach group called Reach to Recovery, which sends recovered patients to talk to recovering patients.

"I still enjoy that," she says. "I probably talk to 27 women a year."

Time, the passage of time, isn't something Teagarden is consumed by. But filling it with what is important is something she is sensitive to.

PERSONALITIES

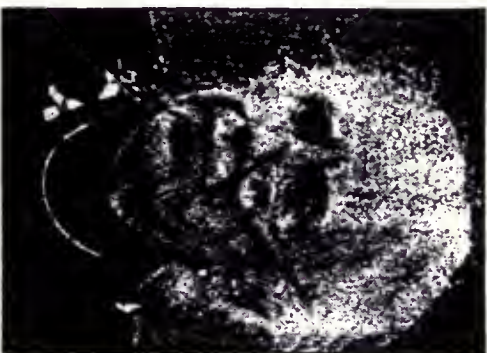
Nine get Kuhn awards for community service

By Alan M. Wolf
Spectrum Staff

Maggie Kuhn, the feisty founder of the Gray Panthers, vowed on her 80th birthday to do something outrageous at least once a week. Nine very active seniors who follow in her footsteps received 1993 Maggie Kuhn Awards on Nov. 17 in Berkeley for their continued contributions to society.

The Over 60 Health Center and Albany/Berkeley Interdependent Elders Network hosted the second annual awards ceremony, billed as "An Evening Celebrating Elders." "The nicest things have been happening to me since I turned 70," said Norma Teagarden, San Francisco's "Grand Lady of Jazz," who took home an award for music. After thrilling the audience with her piano playing, Teagarden slipped out early to make her regular Wednesday night gig at the Washington Square Bar and Grill in San Francisco. Kuhn would have been proud.

Other recipients included Dr. Henrik L. Blum for Health Care, George Sandy for Elder Advocacy, Celestine Greene and Enid Lim for Community Leadership, Ariel Parkinson for Visual Arts, Gregory Bergman for Journalism and Nora Vaughn for Dramatic Arts. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation won the Award for Philanthropy and Ronnie Gilbert,



MAGGIE KUHN
Gray Panthers founder

a singer, playwright and actress who emceed the event, received a special Maggie.

"We saw utterly remarkable elders in all kinds of categories," said Odette Meyers, one of originators of the awards. "These people help put a special stamp of richness on the Bay Area."

The two organizations conceived of the commemoration as a way of bringing attention to Bay Area residents over 60 who are deserving of recognition. Nominations were sent out to representatives of various fields, including health, arts and others, asking for information on spectacular seniors. The Maggie Kuhn committee, comprised of members of the two organizations, then decided which seniors to hon-

or. Noteworthy because of artistic talent or social activism, these people back their beliefs with vigor and passion.

"The recipients must be sustaining some level of activity that will serve as a role model," said Marilyn Bancel, event coordinator. "These are people who keep going."

While unable to travel because of poor health, Philadelphia resident Kuhn, now 87, again lent her name and sent a message to the recipients. "Your creative work is a most appropriate response to the demographic revolution," she wrote. "Our changing society must recognize the historical perspective provided by the awardees. Each of you is a model for our society, especially for the young."

The association with the outspoken octogenarian was part of the honor for the senior recipients of the Awards.

"I've always thought very highly of Maggie Kuhn, she al-

ways gets out there and fights for what she believes in," said Lim, whose vast community

'The recipients must be sustaining some level of activity that will serve as a role model. These are people who keep going.'

work in San Francisco earned her the loving title of "Bag Lady of Chinatown." "That's what I like to practice, so it's exciting to have an award in her name."

Younger members of the respective fields acted as presenters, one generation venerating another. Not once did the youngsters pay respect in the past tense, stressing that their elders still had a lot to offer. The seniors took the stage and expounded on their beliefs, proving that they weren't quite

ready to pass any batons.

Sandy Close, executive editor of Pacific News Service introduced her favorite 86 year-old journalist with these words of praise: "Writing, they say, is best left to the young. Anyone who sticks with a pen for their whole lives must be loony. Which brings me to Gregory Bergman."

"Having Sandy Close give me an award makes me feel like a pro," Bergman said. "She is such an important figure in journalism."

Proceeds from the Maggie Kuhn Awards benefit the Over 60 Health Center and Interdependent Elders Network, which assist over 4,000 seniors each year. The Center provides medical and dental care to all seniors, regardless of income.

For more information call the Elders Network at 644-8978 or the Over 60 Health Center at 644-8758.

A Personal Message

from

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*What the Critics Say...**Orpheum Theatre — Los Angeles*
Examiner Review

Norma Teagarden's Steinway stroking on Hobson Street Blues lifted the proceedings nicely in one brief spot. The Gal pounds a keyboard masterfully in a semi Zurke manner which the audience liked despite the poor P.A. system.

• • •

New York Times— Dec. 4, 1944

Eddie Condon presents Norma Teagarden at Eddie Carnegie Hall Jazz Concert at 5:30 P.M. today.

• • •

Downbeat Magazine - New York, 1944

Norma Teagarden, Jacks Kid Sister, knocked them out with her piano on Eddie Condon's Blue Network Show.

WOULD you like to learn to play popular Music from a well known professional Musician, who can teach you harmony, transposition and a modern style of playing?

You'll be taught how to make your own arrangements of all the current hits, how to compose break and ending and all the little tricks that the professional uses.

All tedious exercises are avoided — your music sounds good from the beginning. You'll be pleased and amazed at your progress.

Adult beginners are welcome !!!

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Jack Teagarden and the Texas School

IN NEW ORLEANS and Chicago, the two centers of jazz style before Kansas City, jazz first appeared as a cultural expression of the black community and, within a generation or less, evoked a powerful response from white musicians in the same areas. In New Orleans the first generation of white musicians included Leon Rappolo, George Brunis, Paul Mares (New Orleans Rhythm Kings), Pete La Roca, Larry Shields, Eddie Edwards (Original Dixieland Jazz Band), Sidney Arodin, and a number of others. Their styles grew out of the rich musical culture they heard around them. White jazz style in Chicago evolved as an intense response to the imported music of King Oliver and other New Orleans bands that began playing there soon after World War I. Bud Freeman, Frank Teschemacher, Jimmy and Dick McPartland (the Austin High School Gang), Eddie Condon, Mezz Mezzrow, Bix Beiderbecke, Wild Bill Davidson, Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, Glenn Miller, and a great many more began their careers as teen-age imitators of various New Orleans instrumentalists whom they heard playing in the clubs on the South Side of Chicago in the early twenties. In a surprisingly short period of time, perhaps five years, Chicago (white) style had become a reality. Its leading spirits remained active in jazz for years to come, and in many instances are still active today. From this cadre of jazzmen came the key musicians of both the Dixieland (small band) movement and the major white swing bands of the thirties (Goodman, Miller, Krupa, and others).

In Kansas City and the Southwest, musical events followed a course similar to those in New Orleans where jazz was a parochial culture, except that in the vast Plains, this culture was spread over a large area of geographical space and fragmented, and might have so remained had it not been for the unifying climate of Kansas City in the Pendergast period. A main difference between Kansas City jazz and the musical style of New Orleans and Chi-

cago is that the white response was weak and scattered. Only in Texas was there a real jazz movement and realization of style among white musicians. White jazz made a strong effort and produced several first-rate Texas bands and jazz musicians—and one very great one, Jack Teagarden.

He was born Weldon Leo Teagarden, August 20, 1905, in Vernon, Texas, an oil town on the Texas-Louisiana-Oklahoma border. To say that the members of the Teagarden family were enthusiastic musicians would be understating the case. Jack's mother played several instruments and was the local piano teacher and church organist; the father, an oil field worker, was a bad but irrepresible amateur cornetist. Two younger brothers, Charlie and Clois, and a younger sister, Norma, were all involved in the Teagarden family musical activities and, like Jack, became professionals—Charlie on trumpet, Clois (Cubby) on drums, and Norma on piano. At one time Clois was with the Oklahoma Symphony Orchestra. Charlie, who played trumpet in the Beiderbecke style, took part in the Chicago movement and, at one time or another, all the younger siblings worked with big brother Jack in his various orchestras.

Jack's instruction began with piano lessons at the age of five. By seven he was playing baritone horn. At ten he was presented with a trombone by his parents. The stocky, somewhat burly young Teagarden's arms were nowhere near long enough to extend the trombone slide to the seven required positions that bring about pitch changes in the instrument through alterations in the length of its air column. Encouraged by his parents, Jack proceeded to work out his own method of playing the instrument, one that would have shocked any music pedagogue. It was the young Texan's version of the trial and error method hit upon by so many other jazzmen: you got your instrument and then taught yourself to play it, helped along by a few tips from the outside, with a great deal of attention given to imitating a set of sounds and models. Teagarden was successful in developing one of the most unorthodox systems of playing trombone in the history of the instrument. In later years, when he was solidly established in the jazz world, his style was a constant source of astonishment among other trombonists and his colleagues. His success was most likely due to the natural assets of an extraordinarily good ear and a flexible pair of lips (chops). He was able to play difficult and intricate passages

with the slide hardly moving at all, by "jipping" the notes. The Teagarden style was empirical, unorthodox, personal, and peculiarly suited to jazz where glissandi, variable pitch, and other effects manageable upon the trombone were highly regarded.

As the young trombonist proceeded to master the instrument, he was surrounded by popular and gospel music at home. His first influences outside of it were Afro-American spirituals that were to be heard no farther away than the lot next door to the Teagarden home.

The spirituals I heard—the first ones I remember—were in Vernon, Texas, from a little colored revival under a tent in a vacant lot next door to our house. They called 'em "Holy Rollers" in those days. These spirituals would build up until they'd fall on the ground . . . and roll around . . . and they'd get their religion. Then they'd get to jabberin' in an "unknown tongue," they'd call it. The singin' building up to this climax was really terrific. I'd sit out there on the picket fence we had and listen to it. And that seemed just as natural to me as anything. . . . I could hum along with 'em with no trouble at all.¹

The Teagarden family moved to Chappell, Nebraska, in 1918, where Jack and his mother appeared in a local theater playing piano-trombone duets and semiclassical material. A year later found the family in Oklahoma City. There Jack listened to more of the Afro-American gospel singing he loved and to the brass bands popular in Oklahoma territory. He also remembers an Indian powwow in 1919, when he was fourteen:

Once a year they used to have these Indian pow-wows . . . near the old fairgrounds. They'd bring their tom-toms and have these war dances. In those days it was . . . pretty "authentic," all right! I mean that was going back to where it hadn't been civilized too long and was the real stuff. . . . When they would sing those Indian chants, you know, that came natural to me, too. I could embellish on that and I could play an Indian thing—just pick up my horn and play it to where you couldn't tell the difference. . . . I don't know how that came so natural.²

Jack Teagarden's career in jazz and dance bands began at sixteen, when he was invited to join a four-piece group led by Cotton Bailey for an engagement at the Horn Palace Inn, San Antonio. A year later Jack joined forces with pianist Terry Shand for a job at the roof garden of the Youree Hotel in Shreveport. In an interview many years later, J. D. Tompkins, an old-time agent who had

booked the job, recalled what he described as Teagarden's "jug" or "stomach" tone. Tommy Joyner, the drummer on the job, remembers that when the band finished up at the hotel, Jack would organize excursions to Fanning Street in the Afro-American section of Shreveport so that the musicians could listen to skiffle bands, blues singers, and boogie-woogie pianists in the honky-tonks, where, in fact, they might well have listened to young Huddie Ledbetter. In his early years as a jazz musician in the Southwest, Jack Teagarden remained as close to Afro-American music as the prevailing segregated structure of society permitted. Later, as an established jazz star in the East, Teagarden was one of the first white jazzmen to make records with black musicians. (*Knockin' a Jug*, Okeh 8703, was recorded March 5, 1929; personnel: Louis Armstrong, trumpet; Jack Teagarden, trombone; Happy Cauldwell, tenor saxophone; Joe Sullivan, piano; Eddie Lang, guitar; Kaiser Marshall, drums. This date and one on which banjoist Eddie Condon appeared with Fats Waller and His Buddies to record *Harlem Fux* and *The Minor Drag* for Victor, March 1, 1929, are the first mixed recording sessions in discography. The results in both instances were outstanding and serve to illustrate the disservice done to musical culture in this country by the American apartheid system.)

In 1921 Teagarden began his association with pianist Peck Kelsey, whose refusal through the years to leave Texas despite attractive employment and recording offers, made him a legendary figure. The band, called Peck's Bad Boys, with Teagarden, Walter Holzhaus, trumpet; George Hill, clarinet; Porter Trest, C melody saxophone; and Terry Shand, who had switched to drums, played one-nighters and hotel jobs in southeastern Texas, with long stands at the Crystal Palace and Garden of Tokio Ballroom, in Joyland Park, near Galveston. Teagarden remained with the group for two years, then went to Wichita Falls to seek his fortune in the oil fields. In this he was unsuccessful; a well he worked on a share basis turned out to be a "duster" and within a few months he was back in the music business, as a member of a traveling group called the Southern Trumpeters. Teagarden ran into the band at a club in Wichita Falls and was asked to sit in as a kind of musical joke, the musicians hoping to have some fun with the young stranger who was dressed in the height of jazz-age fashion (long-billed cap and French model suit with ankle-length, tight-

fitting trousers) and ostentatiously displayed a new gold-plated Holton trombone. Teagarden turned the tables on the would-be pranksters by playing most of the evening with nothing more than the slide and a cowbell borrowed from the drummer. At the end of the evening he was invited to join the band.

The Southern Trumpeters made their headquarters in a single room at the Haven Tea Room in Wichita Falls and barnstormed through the Panhandle. In 1924, R. J. Marin, the band's manager, obtained a booking at the Baker Hotel in Dallas where the Trumpeters played opposite Jimmie's Joes from the University of Texas and Teagarden, using a small megaphone in the style of the day, sang his first vocals. After the hotel engagement, Marin took the band through Texas and into Mexico; there it played at an exclusive restaurant called Abel's, situated opposite the Mexican National Opera. The American jazzmen proved an attraction for the men in the national opera orchestra who came nightly to the restaurant to listen, especially to Teagarden with his strange "stomach" tone and unorthodox technique.

From Mexico City, Teagarden returned to Houston for a reunion with Peck's Bad Boys. Kelley had secured the summer job at Sylvan Beach, a resort outside the city, and brought in three New Orleans musicians, Arnold Loyocano, bass and tuba; Leon Prima, older brother of Louis Prima, trumpet; and the famous and very gifted Leon Rappolo, clarinet. Rappolo had recorded with Friar's Society Orchestra and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings for Genett the year before and was at the peak of his powers, but was soon to go mad and spend the rest of his life in a mental institution. Peck's Bad Boys may well have been the best jazz band in the Southwest in 1924, such early bands of Troy Floyd or Alphonso Trent notwithstanding. Teagarden has compared Kelley to Art Tatum. Teagarden's abilities and those of Rappolo are well enough documented on recordings. Unfortunately, the band never got inside a studio, and Peck Kelley, during the course of a professional career extending from 1920 to well after World War II, never made a record. After Jack Teagarden had established himself as one of the top jazzmen in the East, he made repeated efforts to get Kelley to leave Texas to join name bands and also to get him into a recording studio, all to no avail. Kelley simply preferred to live at home and gig in small, obscure bands around the Houston area.

When the Sylvan Beach job wound up in the fall of 1924, Teagarden went to Kansas City to work a few weeks at the Baltimore Hotel with Willard Robison's Deep River Boys, one of the name attractions of the day. The opportunities to play jazz behind Robison, a singer with a florid, sentimental style, were limited. A disenchanted Teagarden moved on to Oklahoma City for another short stay with Doc Ross and the Jazz Bandits, then to St. Louis for a few weeks with Ted Jansen's society dance orchestra, then to Shreveport for a job with Johnny Youngberg at the Youree Hotel. Teagarden's movements seem to have been motivated by a restless search for stimulating musical companions and favorable conditions for playing jazz, but the two rarely seemed to fall together. Teagarden was barely twenty years of age, four years a professional, a well-traveled jazzman with a unique style and considerable reputation in the Southwest, yet the only consistent support and encouragement he had received were from fellow musicians. The public seemed indifferent to his abilities.

A telegram from Doc Ross, one of the few bands with which Teagarden had been happy, reached him in Memphis where he had gone with Youngberg, and Teagarden boarded the train for Albuquerque, where in the fall of 1925 he again teamed up with the Jazz Bandits. The personnel of the band was Sugar Ramey, trumpet; Bob McCracken, Ocie Geyer, and Walter Bolts, saxophones; Snaps Elliott, piano and accordion; Paps Maples, string bass and tuba; Doc Ross, drums. Teagarden's trombone filled out the brass section. While the band was still working in Albuquerque a live-wire, one-armed cornetist named Joe Wingy Manone joined the group. An engagement at Hotel Paso del Norte in El Paso followed; then the Jazz Bandits went by train to Los Angeles for a long stand at Solomon's Penny Dance Arcade, a large, popular ballroom operation where each dance cost a penny a person (two cents per couple).

At Solomon's suggestion and expense, the band was billed as Doc Ross and His Texas Cowboys and outfitted with boots and other items of Western apparel. The Bandits performed in rotation with two other bands that played jazz—Doc Gutterson's Band of All Nations (the personnel included a scattering of musicians with oriental or Mexican-American ethnic backgrounds), and the leading black orchestra in Southern California, the undeservedly obscure Curtis Mosby Blue Blowers. The engagement was a high-

water mark for jazz in Los Angeles in the twenties. The town had heard its first authentic jazz a couple of years before when Jelly Roll Morton and Kid Ory and his Pods of Peppers settled in the West Coast city. Before leaving Los Angeles, the Jazz Bandits played the Rendezvous Ballroom on the pier at nearby Santa Monica. Here Teagarden met a former drummer with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, Ben Pollack, beginning an association that would lead to Jack's first important job in New York a few years later.

From Los Angeles, the Jazz Bandits made their way back to home territory in Texas and began another broken schedule of sporadic bookings and job insecurity. Finally Teagarden and Manone left the group and launched their own band in Biloxi, Mississippi. With the two coleaders, both of whom were brass soloists and capable singers, the jazz content of the band was higher than its appeal to dancers and Wingy soon left to front his own group. In October, 1926, Teagarden joined the newly organized New Orleans Rhythm Masters with Terry Shand, Sidney Arodin, Charlie Cordilla, saxophone, and Red Bohlman, trumpet. The Rhythm Masters played the Somerset Club in San Antonio, the Rialto Theatre and Winter Garden in Tulsa, and then found themselves stranded once more. In desperation Teagarden and Arodin took employment with a band at a place called The Alley, in Seminole, Oklahoma, a taxi hall noted for its fights and rough clientele. The job paid a few dollars in cash, plus room and board. And once more Teagarden was bailed out by Doc Ross. He joined the Jazz Bandits for the fourth and last time at the Rice Hotel in Houston for the summer of 1927. When that job ran out, even the durable Ross was fed up with the hand to mouth existence of the jazzman in the Southwest. National and regional prosperity was close to the peak in 1927. Black orchestras—Alphonso Trent, Troy Floyd, Coy's Black Aces, George Morrison, the Blue Devils, Bennie Moten, George Lee, the Clouds of Joy, and a number of others—were all doing well, but apparently the public refused to take the white jazz musician seriously.

Doc Ross received a letter from Walter Botts, a former saxophonist with the Jazz Bandits who had gone East to join Johnny Johnson's Orchestra. Botts wrote that Johnny Johnson was about to leave the Post Lodge, Larchmont, New York, for a better booking at the Statler Hotel and that the job was open if Ross were in-

terested. The musicians talked the situation over and came to a decision to leave Texas. With the twenty-two-year-old Jack Teagarden as one of the party, the entire band left for New York in a single automobile.

Thus ended Jack Teagarden's southwestern *wanderyahr*: the great talent that audiences there had taken for granted was quickly recognized in the East. Within a year, Teagarden was a member of the new Ben Pollack Orchestra that included Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Gil Rodin, Jimmy McPartland, and Ray Bauduc. From then on Teagarden's jazz reputation was assured. After his tenure with the Ben Pollack Orchestra, Teagarden's affiliations were Red Nichols and His Five Pennies (1931), Dorsey Brothers Orchestra (1931), Ben Pollack (1932), Mal Hallett (1933), Wingy Manone (1933), and the Paul Whiteman Orchestra (1934-1938). In 1939 Jack Teagarden left Paul Whiteman to embark on his own successful career as a dance and jazz bandleader. Charlie, Clois, and Norma Teagarden worked in their brother's band at various times. When the big bands went out of business in the war years, Jack Teagarden became a featured member of the Louis Armstrong All-Stars. Later he toured with the Jack Teagarden All-Stars that included Marvin Ash, piano; Charlie Teagarden, trumpet; and Ray Bauduc, drums. In 1958 Teagarden was an official musical ambassador for the United States Department of State for an eighteen-week tour of Asia. The trombonist died January 15, 1964, of bronchial pneumonia at the Prince Montl Motel in New Orleans where he had been leading his sextet at the Dream Room.

At the time of his death, Jack Teagarden had been a professional jazz musician for over forty years. The Teagarden discography is one of the most extensive in jazz, comparable to Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, and Coleman Hawkins, and runs to a total of nearly 1,000 titles. Only the formative years with the bands of the Southwest are undocumented. Teagarden appeared in eighteen motion pictures. Among these were *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, a documentary of the 1957 Newport Jazz Festival, and *Birth of the Blues*, starring Bing Crosby, Teagarden's old friend and colleague from Paul Whiteman days.

Jack Teagarden's trombone style exploited to the fullest the legato and liquid qualities of the instrument. Musicians who worked with Jack in his formative period have commented on his unusual

facility. According to Tim Kelly, clarinetist with the Louisiana Ramblers, a band that crossed paths with the Southern Trumpeters and Jazz Bandits, Teagarden had sufficient range to play second trumpet parts in band scores.⁴ Ross Majestic, trumpet star of the Southern Trumpeters, has commented on Teagarden's flexible and sensitive "chops" which enabled him to "lip" notes.⁵ Bob White, drummer with Peck's Bad Boys, speaking of his impression of Teagarden about 1924, said, "He played like nobody I had ever heard. He would sit there in a straight chair, eyes closed, rocking back and forth, with his hand never going past the bell, and playing the most beautiful notes I had ever heard."⁶ Teagarden was one of those rare musicians who combined extraordinary, if unorthodox technical ability with a deep, abiding jazz sense. He was at home in all tempi and ranks as one of the finest blues players of jazz. When Teagarden led bands of his own, using run-of-the-mill sidemen and turning out an acceptable but never distinguished brand of big band dance music, his own playing did not seem to suffer from the commercial surroundings in which he found himself. It is said that Teagarden never made a bad record, nor did Jack lack admirers among his fellow musicians, black, white, classical, Dixieland, swing, or modern. Bebop trumpet man Red Rodney recalls working with Teagarden on a 1947 tour billed as the Cavalcade of Jazz. A very mixed, if not ill-advised collection of jazz names included Teagarden, Lips Page, Dinah Washington, and an avant-garde hop group composed of Rodney, George Auld, Serge Chaloff, Tiny Kahn, and George Wallington. According to Rodney, Teagarden was the best thing on the program. "Jack's style seemed to take in all the known jazz schools. His mastery of the trombone was amazing. The new chords and ways of phrasing the bebop musicians were into didn't seem to bother him a bit. Jack may well have been the greatest of all jazz trombonists."⁷

Peck Kelley remained in the Houston area after all the first generation jazz musicians had left Texas and for many years headed the house band at a Houston supper club. Although the jazz historian is apt to look upon legendary reputations with skepticism, the testimonials to Kelley's musicianship are numerous and impressive. Pee Wee Russell said, "Peck not only played an awful lot of piano, he played so positive and clean. He had a 'this is mine'

style, with plenty of authority. And he wasn't like other fast pianists up north, who didn't know the blues. He and I spent a lot of time that summer [1924] listening to Bessie Smith records. It was our way of going to church."⁸ Quoted in *Down Beat*, Ben Pollack said "Out of this world. A man would have to practice 36 hours a day to play that much."⁹ And Jack Teagarden remembered, "If you didn't look at him, Peck would play 10 choruses in a row. But it would get so great, you'd just have to look; then he'd get self-conscious and stop."¹⁰

In a *Down Beat* profile, Richard Hadlock, who visited Kelley in Houston, in 1965 and found him living modestly in retirement, was able to hear a badly worn air check from a broadcast of one of Kelley's bands at the Dixie Bar in that city, and so arrive at some evaluation of the pianist's style. "Fleet, clean lines and unusual, undated ideas made it clear that even in 1948 at fifty, Kelley was still in Art Tatum's league. His solos on *Dark Eyes*, *Honey-suckle Rose*, and *Flying Home* were fascinatingly complex, highly pianistic structures, full of rapid runs in octaves and swirling melodic lines calling for extraordinary technique command. Moreover, these were not delivered in the harmonic and rhythmic language of the 20's or 30's, but in the late swing idiom of jazzmen like Tatum and Oscar Peterson."¹¹

Kelley did make one effort to leave Texas. According to Pee Wee Russell, "Right after the Sylvan Beach job Peck came to St. Louis. Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer and I were at the Arcadia. Peck scared Bix and Trumbauer—they went crazy over him—and we all agreed he had to be in the band. But we couldn't get past the union. We tried everything, even bribing the union man. The money wasn't as important as the music, and we were willing to pay Peck out of our own pockets. Nothing worked. We got a few club jobs for him to meet expenses, but it was a shame Peck wasn't allowed to work that Arcadia job. He was very advanced harmonically and just what we wanted. He went home more convinced than ever that it was a mistake to leave home."¹²

Apart from a short engagement with Joe Gillis in New Orleans, Peck Kelley never left Texas again. During the war he served his time in an army band in San Antonio. A 1940 article in *Collier's*, titled "Kelley Won't Budge," and written in purple prose, helped

publicize the Kelley legend and from Tin Pan Alley came a hit tune *Beat Me, Daddy, Eight to the Bar* with the words

In a little honky tonky village in Texas,
There's a guy who plays the best piano by far,
He can play piano any way that you like it,
But the kind he plays the best is eight to the bar.

Eight to the bar was just one of the minor piano styles in Kelley's varied repertory and the resulting publicity made him more determined than before to stay where he was. "If I had a lot of money the only thing I could do with it is buy what I already got," he told *Collier's* writer Walter Davenport. "I could buy another piano, another phonograph, another suit. But I couldn't use two of everything. If a man's got all he needs, he don't need any more of the same. The more you got, the things you own, the more time you've got to spend watching them. . . . That's how I feel about Peck Kelley."¹³

After the *Collier's* article, and follow-up articles in lesser magazines, offers arrived from Ben Pollack, Jack Teagarden, the Dorsey Brothers, and Rudy Vallee. Pollack proposed a trust fund plan in which Kelley's earnings would be withheld and invested while the pianist was doled out \$60 a week for running expenses. John Hammond, in charge of jazz A&R for Columbia-Vocacion-Okeh records, tried to get Kelley into a recording studio, anywhere at all. Nick Rongetti, jazz-loving owner of Nick's in Greenwich Village, invited Kelley to join the long list of famous jazz keyboard artists who had played there as singles—all without result. Kelley would not budge. He retired sometime in the sixties. The presence of the recorded sample from the Dixie Club suggests that deter-mined jazz researchers in Texas may conceivably come across similar air checks of broadcasts made from nightclubs, not only those of Peck Kelley, but Alphonso Trent, Troy Floyd, and other Texas jazz bands and artists. Similar material with previously unknown work by Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Billie Holiday, and Charlie Parker, dating from the late thirties, has rewarded re-searchers recently.

Little research has been done on the white bands of the Southwest and, apart from Jack Teagarden and Peck Kelley, of their individual jazzmen. At this late date, and in the absence of the all-important recordings, the chances of a complete picture of these

activities would appear remote.¹⁴ On the basis of available evidence, the best indigenous bands appear to have been the Doc Ross Jazz Bandits and various Peck Kelley groups. The Southwest was frequently traveled by first rate New Orleans bands and musicians, including the New Orleans Rhythm Masters and the Johnny Bayersdoerffer five-piece band with Nappy Lamare and Ray Bauduc, later with the Bob Crosby Bobcats.

If any conclusions are to be drawn from the evidence at hand, it is that the black musician of the Southwest could count on the support of his own people, Afro-Americans like himself who understood the blues and jazz and created a consumer market for the musical product. This situation does not appear to have existed in the white community where jazz was regarded as a typical and exotic style played by black musicians, and something of a novelty or musical joke when played by white men. It is worth noting that throughout his Texas period, Jack Teagarden was subject to various billings as a trick or novelty artist, for example, as "The World's Greatest Sensational Trombone Wonder" with J. P. Martin's Southern Trumpeters at the Baker Hotel in Dallas. When the Doc Ross Jazz Bandits were booked into Solomon's Penny Dance Hall in Los Angeles, the management found it necessary to present them not as a jazz band but a novelty cowboy band. Meanwhile, the black jazz musicians on the same bill, Mosby's Blue Blowers, were allowed to play, and be themselves. This curious line of reasoning followed by the white establishment mentality had one beneficial effect—Afro-American jazz in the 1920s was able to develop at its own pace and without very much interference from the Establishment. At the same time, the rigid system of segregation, originating in the old plantation South, but fully operative in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Arkansas, not to mention Kansas and Missouri, prevented more than across-the-fence exchanges of ideas between white and black jazz musicians; the riches of Afro-American culture were lost to the white public. Outside of jazz musicians like Jack Teagarden and Wingy Man-one, and a few perceptive laymen like John and Alan Lomax, the average Southerner of that period had not the faintest idea that a powerful, indigenous, and unique music, soon to be accepted and admired throughout the civilized world, was growing up like weeds around his back doorstep.



Becoming Older

By Mauree Jane Perry

Finding a sense of balance in life

NORMA TEAGARDEN loves her Wednesday nights. She also loves her husband, their cozy flat in San Francisco, vacations to Hawaii, friends, foreign films, dining out, a lot of things.

But on Wednesday nights especially, the Empress of Jazz and the Queen of Stride Piano, as she has been called, celebrates life.

She dresses in one of her elegant, tailored outfits, kisses her husband goodnight and drives downtown. And then, as soon as the clock strikes nine at the Washington Square Bar and Grill, one of the City's most popular restaurants, she goes to work — sliding onto the piano bench and rolling out those jazzy rhythms for which she's become famous.

By 10 o'clock, Teagarden's taken only one short break. By 11, her inner circle of loyal fans have arrived. By midnight, a bass player, and maybe a trumpeter or two have settled in to jam with her. And by 1 a.m., Teagarden says, she has received at least as much pleasure as her customers keep telling her she gives.

At 73 years of age, Norma Teagarden, tall, trim, with clear baby-blue eyes and short hair streaked with gray, is the only active member of America's great jazz family, the Teagarden clan of Texas.

Twentieth century America did not spawn many female jazz musicians, yet Teagarden was one of the first to play jazz piano with an all-male band. She was also one of the earliest to have had her own all-female band. Mayors have honored her. Music authorities have written about her. Jazz festivals continue to feature and crown her.

But what makes her additionally and particularly rare, now, is her perspective and sense of balance.

"This is a nice time in my life," she says, her throaty, smiling voice tracing back to her Oklahoma roots.

"Some musicians, like my brother Charles, stop performing before they actually have to because they would rather quit while they're at the top. Others keep driving themselves to always produce more and more no matter what they've accomplished. But I'm in neither of those two places. I just like to play.

"I know that if I go too long without it, I miss it: Tunes and melodies start going in my head and I've just got to get them out." She laughs at her own earnestness, something she has learned to do.

Indeed, life has taught Teagarden many lessons. There was a time, during the Depression, when if she didn't play, she didn't eat. But experience has also taught her there are other things not necessarily instead of but in addition to music.

One of the most important is her husband John Friedlander, a man eight years younger who fell in love with and married her almost 30 years ago after a three-week courtship. Also important are her friendships and the month she spends every year in Hawaii.

How did she learn to relax and enjoy?

"That first time I got sick, back in '48 with cancer of the thyroid, was tough," she says. "I owe a lot of my recovery to finally understanding why I got sick, all that pressure and all, and finally realizing the importance of . . . well, positive thinking I guess you could call it. I certainly believe in medicine, but prayer helped me too.

"I don't mean a begging kind of prayer, where you're asking for something for yourself. But I do believe in the kind of prayer that lets you understand and helps you let go. 'Not my will, but thine' kind of thinking is important.

"Of course," she adds with one of her easy smiles, "I can't always manage to do that, but it's the goal."

Reaching out to help others has also been one of her ways of coping. Five years ago, she discovered she had cancer of the breast. After a radical mastectomy, she joined the outreach group called Reach to Recovery, which sends recovered patients to talk to recovering patients.

"I still enjoy that," she says. "I probably talk to 27 women a year."

Time, the passage of time, isn't something Teagarden is consumed by. But filling it with what is important is something she is sensitive to.



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